UNIVERSITY OF
CHARLESTON LIBRARY
1700018162

MORRIS HARVEY COLLEGE
CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

ANDREW S. THOMAS
MEMORIAL LIBRARY

CALL NUMBER
227.83
R79p

ACCESSION
13438

DATE DUE

R. Clark.
Warren Vt. Dec 25, 06

EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

3 3 1 C 1

PAUL'S IDEAL CHURCH AND PEOPLE.

A Popular Commentary

WITH A SERIES OF FORTY SERMONETTES ON THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

BY

ALFRED ROWLAND, LL.B., B.A.

(LONDON UNIVERSITY).

Do not return to library.

NEW YORK:
E. B. TREAT, 771 BROADWAY.
Office of "The Treasury."
1888.

13438

RR7.83
R79p

This Volume

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED

TO

MY MOTHER,

TO WHOSE EXAMPLE AND INFLUENCE
HER SON OWES AS MUCH AS TIMOTHY OWED TO EUNICE;
AND WHO,
IN THE SWEET SERENITY OF HER OLD AGE,
IS CROWNED WITH THE REVERENT AFFECTION
OF ALL WHO KNOW HER.

PREFACE.

In the following pages I have attempted to give my readers a popular exposition of a singularly interesting Epistle. The text of the Revised Version, which has been universally recognised as a valuable result of modern scholarship, has been used for the exegetical section. This is followed by a series of forty sermonettes, in which every part of the Epistle is dealt with practically and homiletically. In these, it has been my earnest endeavour to present the whole letter as a living utterance from the greatest inspired theologian ever possessed by the Church. It is my hope and prayer that, while the thoughtful reader may find here some guidance amidst the difficulties and controversies of the present day, the homilies may not be without value to those whom God has appointed to be the religious teachers of their age, whether in the pulpit, in the class, or in the home.

I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to the works of abler theologians and critics, and especially to "The Pastoral Epistles," by the Rev. Patrick Fairbairn, D.D.,

and to the valuable papers contributed to "The Expositor" by the Rev. H. R. Reynolds, D.D. If I have brought any of the treasures of more abstruse scholarship within reach of my readers, and if I have been enabled to place material ready to the hands of busy builders in Christ's Temple of Truth and Righteousness, my labour of love will not have been in vain.

ALFRED ROWLAND.

Crouch End, London,
July 1887.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION xi

EXPOSITORY NOTES 1

SERMONETTES ON FIRST CHAPTER.

I. THE APOSTLE'S CLAIM TO AUTHORITY 35

II. THE RELATIONS OF PAUL AND TIMOTHY 42

III. A CHRISTIAN SALUTATION 48

IV. TIMOTHY'S CHARGE 52

V. THE END OF THE COMMANDMENT 57

VI. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW 61

VII. THE SUMMONS TO SERVICE 69

VIII. THE GOSPEL IN A SENTENCE 75

IX. PRAISE FOR SALVATION 81

X. TIMOTHY'S CHARGE AND WARNING 85

SERMONETTES ON SECOND CHAPTER.

I. INTERCESSORY PRAYER 93

II. THE ATONEMENT 101

III. ON PRAYER 109

IV. WOMAN'S TRUE DIGNITY 113

V. THE POSITION OF WOMAN 119

SERMONETTES ON THIRD CHAPTER.

I. THE IDEAL MINISTER 127

II. THE IDEAL DEACON 138

III. THE HOUSE OF GOD 141

IV. THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS 152

SERMONETTES ON FOURTH CHAPTER.

PAGE

I. A GREAT HERESY 159
II. OUR CHARTER OF FREEDOM 167
III. COUNSELS TO GOD'S SERVANTS 175
IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER . . 183

SERMONETTES ON FIFTH CHAPTER.

I. CHRISTIAN REPROOFS 193
II. HOME RESPONSIBILITIES 197
III. CHARITY RULED BY WISDOM 202
IV. DUTIES TOWARDS THE MINISTRY 209
V. ASCETICISM 221
VI. RETRIBUTION AND REWARD 224

SERMONETTES ON SIXTH CHAPTER.

I. UNDER THE YOKE 229
II. CHRISTIAN SLAVES AND THEIR MASTERS 236
III. A CONTRAST BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE TEACHING . 242
IV. CONTENTMENT 247
V. COVETOUSNESS 252
VI. THE MAN OF GOD 258
VII. THE CHRISTIAN CONTEST 265
VIII. THE FIGHT OF FAITH 270
IX. MOTIVES TO STEADFASTNESS 273
X. THE PERILS AND POSSIBILITIES OF THE RICH . . . 279
XI. PERIL AND PRESERVATION 285

INTRODUCTION.

Authorship.

Until the present century the authenticity of this Epistle was never questioned by any one holding a recognised position in the Christian Church. From the earliest times it was universally accepted as the writing of St. Paul, except by Gnostics and Marcionites, who naturally repudiated teaching which was irreconcilable with their heresies. In the year 1807, however, objections to its authenticity were raised in a letter of Schleiermacher's. These have been exhaustively treated, and, as we believe, satisfactorily disposed of, by competent authorities, so that we shall not attempt to deal with them here in detail, although some of them are necessarily touched upon in the following pages. In these introductory remarks we content ourselves with calling the reader's attention to the evident transparency and earnestness of our author, which make it incredible that he should be guilty of assuming to be what he was not, and of inventing circumstances and relationships which had no existence in fact. An unprejudiced reader will surely acquit him of that sin of "speaking lies in hypo-

crisy," which in the Epistle he distinctly and solemnly denounces.

THE TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING

it is impossible to fix with certainty. The only historical record of St. Paul's life is the Acts of the Apostles, which closes abruptly before the termination of his labours. There is satisfactory evidence for believing that the imprisonment there referred to ended either in the acquittal of the prisoner, or more probably in his discharge, through the non-appearance of his prosecutors, for their case had broken down so completely in the provincial court, that any shrewd Roman lawyer would advise them that further proceedings against him would be futile. It is clear from Philippians i. 27, and from Philemon 22, that St. Paul expected some such issue, and hoped at no distant date to resume his labours. The traditions of the Church strongly confirm the belief that this hope was fulfilled, and that several years were spent in evangelistic work, before he was imprisoned a second time, and beheaded in the reign of Nero. This period would give opportunity for writing the Pastoral Epistles, and the interval which elapsed between them and the earlier letters will account for some of the slight differences in style by which they are distinguished. The Second Epistle to Timothy was unquestionably written while the Apostle was in prison, awaiting his trial with far more anxiety as to the issue than appears in former letters, and with none of the alleviations mentioned in the Acts. He represents himself as being jealously guarded, as he

was not when dwelling "in his own hired house." He refers to the danger his friends incurred in coming to see him, or in appearing to be identified with him, and entreats his beloved son to hasten to Rome, that he might comfort him by his presence, and receive the last instructions of one who had "finished" his course. All this points to a second imprisonment; and it is to the period immediately preceding it, while the Apostle was still free in his movements, that we unhesitatingly assign the First Epistle to Timothy, who had been left in Ephesus; and the letter to Titus, who was labouring in Crete. Where St. Paul was when he thus wrote, it is impossible to determine. The Revised Version very properly omits the subscriptions which refer to "Laodicea," "Rome," and "Nicopolis;" for all of them are without warrant, and the first and third are obviously incorrect. Laodicea, to which our Epistle is attributed, was in Asia, which Paul had left before writing it, for he reminds Timothy that he had departed into Macedonia. Probably it was from Philippi, or some other city in the Macedonian province, that he despatched this letter.

The Value of the Pastoral Epistles

it would be difficult to overrate. They contain the counsels given by the great Apostle to the Gentiles on recurrent difficulties, at the period when his experience and practical wisdom were most mature. In earlier letters he had dealt very fully with the doctrines of Christianity, but here he addresses himself to the govern-

ment and organisation of the Church. He wisely reserved what he wished to say respecting the manifestation of religious life until he had treated of its essence; for Church government follows Christian teaching, and is less important than it. In apostolic days the organisation of the Church was of the simplest kind. Besides bishops and deacons there were few (if any) recognised officials. Indeed it is an open question whether the Church would not have saved herself from bitter conflicts if she had been content with her early simplicity, or if she had been willing to permit the religious life of each Christian Church to manifest itself freely under the sunshine of heavenly love, in the form most natural to itself, as God-given life always does in nature. Be that as it may, it is one happy result of the simpler methods, characteristic of the apostolic era, that St. Paul was able to deal with the difficulties which arose then, not by detailed and technical instructions, but by the enunciation of a few great principles, which have proved capable of applications unlimited in their variety, amid the new controversies of each succeeding age. This will have numerous exemplifications in the homiletical portion of this volume.

The Object

of the First Epistle to Timothy was to advise the young evangelist, and to strengthen his authority in dealing with the practical difficulties and doctrinal controversies which confronted him in Ephesus. He had been left in charge of the Church in that great city as the represen-

tative of the Apostle, whose return was very uncertain. His want of previous experience and his gentle temperament rendered the important position assigned to him one of peculiar difficulty. Though he was not effeminate, his piety was of a feminine type. He was more disposed to flexibility than to firmness, and appears to have been lacking in the daring of personal initiative. This was natural, for his constitutional peculiarities had been fostered by circumstances. As the close and constant companion of St. Paul he had hitherto been content to carry out his great leader's instructions with loving fidelity. But now in Ephesus he had for the first time to stand alone amongst jealous opponents, whose age and ability made them formidable. The reception of such a letter as this would be an inspiration to him, under the impetus of which he would be ready to dare and do great things for the cause of Christ. But our Epistle has proved of permanent value to the Church, giving to its teachers in age after age a deeper sense of their responsibilities, and affording them a treasury of practical wisdom which enables them to meet on the one hand hierarchical assumptions, and on the other "the oppositions of science falsely so called."

A flood of light is cast by this letter on the personal relationship existing between Paul and Timothy, which was so close, tender, and sacred, that it is best represented by the love between father and son. The steadfastness of this beautiful friendship was due in part to the winsomeness and nobility of the Apostle, who was a born leader of men; but in part also to the loyal and lovable dis-

position of Timothy. He seems to have been distinguished alike for sensitiveness and for earnestness. Simple in character, unfailing in consideration for others, self-forgetful almost to a fault, devout and spiritually minded, he was at once a noble evangelist, and the dearest comrade of this great Apostle, who, under the shadow of approaching death, yearned for his presence more than for that of any other friend on earth. Our interest in this young evangelist is intensified when we remember that he is the earliest example in the history of the Church of one trained for the service of our Lord by a Christian mother. In this he appears as the first fruit of a splendid harvest-field.

EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

EXPOSITORY NOTES.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. **According to the commandment of God.**—As God's messenger and ambassador Paul spoke with authority (Gal. i. 1). **Our Saviour.**—A title seldom given, as it is here, to the Father. The only other instances occur in the Pastoral Epistles, in Jude, and in the Magnificat. **Our hope.**—Hope glowed more intensely in the Apostle as he neared the end of his life's journey.

Ver. 2. **My true child.**—Timothy's new life had come to him through Paul's words. It was fatherly love which inspired the prayer in this verse. **Mercy** is here added to the usual form of benediction. In the growing infirmities of old age Paul felt increasingly the preciousness of Divine mercy, and from his own past experience he knew how necessary it was for Timothy, a gentle-hearted man, who was called to do the work of a hero.

Ver. 3. **As I exhorted thee**—not "besought," as in A. V. He did not entreat this as a personal favour, but urged Timothy to it as his appointed duty. The sentence

thus begun is left incomplete. **When I was going into Macedonia.**—Whether on this journey he visited Ephesus, leaving Timothy there, or whether his foreboding at Miletus was fulfilled, is uncertain. **Certain men**—a slightly contemptuous phrase. **A different doctrine**—from that which I have taught, and thou hast learned. The heresies alluded to are best left indefinite. Error is protean, but in every form it is to be exposed and rebuked.

Ver. 4. **Fables.**—The allusion is probably to Jewish myths, such as those preserved in the Talmud. **Endless genealogies.**—Fanciful and foolish use was made of those which are given in the Old Testament. Philo, for example, founded a whole system of psychology upon them. **The which minister** — give rise to **questionings**—disputes of words, which can have no practical use. **Rather than a dispensation of God**—such as was the subject of apostolic preaching. **Which is,** finds its sphere, **in faith.**

Ver. 5. **But the end,** or purpose, **of the charge** given by God in the Gospel **is love** (Matt. xxii. 36–40; Rom. xiii. 10; 1 Cor. xiii. 13). **A pure heart**—unstained by sensuality or by selfishness. **A good conscience**—free from guilt and void of offence. **And faith unfeigned**—without hypocritical pretence. From this verse it appears that the false teachers were leading men away from the earnest, loving, Christ-like life to which they were called by the Gospel.

Ver. 6. **Having swerved** from the ideal they ought to have been aiming at, they **have turned aside unto vain talking.** It is easier to quibble over Christ's words than to imitate Christ's life.

Ver. 7. **Desiring to be** — announcing themselves as being—**teachers of the law.** The Mosaic law is in the apostle's mind. **They understand neither what they say**

—language is vague when convictions are non-existent—**nor whereof they confidently affirm**=they do not know anything about the real truth which lies under the phrases they use.

Ver. 8. **The law is good.**—Its proper use is to testify against the sins which are enumerated, because it was into these that the false teachers and their followers were falling through their moral laxity. The law is used **lawfully** when it arouses horror of sin and brings the ungodly to penitence.

Ver. 9. **A righteous man** here signifies a morally virtuous man, who is the opposite of those next mentioned. **The lawless** — careless about law—**unruly**, or insubordinate, who are defiant of law. **The ungodly** are those who have no reverence for God, and **the sinners** are those who openly offend Him. **The unholy and profane**—alienated both from God and from His law, repudiating all connection with what is holy and sacred.

Having referred to those who disregard the first table of the law, the apostle goes through the second table, down to the ninth commandment inclusive, taking each in its order. **Murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers**—transgressors of the fifth commandment, who might be denoted also by the word "smiters," which appears in the margin. **Manslayers**—violators of the sixth commandment.

Ver. 10. **For fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men**—including all sins of abomination against both sexes. **Men-stealers.**—Slave-dealing is the most hideous form of disobedience to the eighth commandment; for to steal the man himself, and rob him of the freedom which his Maker gave him, is atrocious. **Liars** and **false-swearers** break the ninth commandment. The

tenth is omitted, possibly because of its more spiritual nature, for the apostle was here dealing with the grosser sins. **Sound doctrine** means teaching which is healthy and wholesome, as opposed to what is sickly, morbid, or artificial.

Ver. 11. **The Gospel of the glory**=the good news of the glory of God, which is love, redeeming the sinful through Christ—**which was committed to my trust.** Paul recalls this fact with the more thankfulness when he remembers how near he once was to becoming such a false teacher as he is here rebuking. This leads him to a digression, in which he adoringly records his own experience of Divine mercy.

Ver. 12. **Enabled me.**—Giving him strength and light for his work. **Christ Jesus**—whom he saw and heard on the road to Damascus (Acts ix. 5). **Counted me faithful**—God foresaw that he would prove so.

Ver. 13. Paul's thankfulness is the greater because of his previous opposition to the Gospel, with which he was now intrusted. **Injurious**—ὑβριστής signifies insolence revealed in acts of wantonness and outrage. History does not record all the sins of which conscience reminded this former persecutor. **Ignorantly** (Luke xxiii. 34), **in unbelief**—ignorance was the cause of the unbelief.

Ver. 14. **With faith and love.**—These accompanied the gift of superabounding **grace**, and found their home **in Christ Jesus.**

Ver. 15. **Faithful**=worthy of credit, **is the saying.** These axioms of the Christian faith, circulated as they were among believers, are peculiar to the Pastoral Epistles, and indicate their later date. **I am chief**—not "I was," nor "I am one of the chief," either of which would have been less startling. This is an expression of the deepest

humility, and was perfectly sincere. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 9.

Ver. 16. **Howbeit** indicates the contrast between the Apostle's judgment of himself and the mercy God had displayed towards him. **In me as chief,** or "first" of those so graciously forgiven. **His long-suffering** gave time for repentance. **Believe on,** is a phrase which brings out the idea of reliance. Saving faith is not so much crediting Christ's words as relying on Christ Himself, the Giver of **eternal life** (John xvii. 2).

Ver. 17. This doxology to the Father is similar to Rom. xvi. 25–27. **The King Eternal** = "the King of the ages." **Incorruptible** (Rom. i. 23). **Invisible** (John i. 18; 1 John iv. 12). **The only God**—the word "wise" is interpolated in the A. V. from the doxology in Romans.

Ver. 18. **This charge**—not the one given in vers. 3–5, but the charge to fight courageously, which immediately follows. **My child**—an expression which indicates not only Paul's love, but his consciousness of Timothy's weakness, and his expectation that he would succeed him in his work, as a son would follow his father. **Prophecies** were by no means infrequent in the early Church (Acts xxi. 10, 11, xiii. 2). In accordance with those uttered when Timothy was set apart for his work, the apostle here exhorts him: **That by them thou,** &c.—well rendered by Luther, "that thou therein do a knightly work."

Ver. 19. **Faith and a good conscience** are twin-sisters. A man with a bad conscience eagerly abjures the faith. On the other hand, true faith purifies the conscience. **Which some having thrust from them.**—The allusion is to conscience, which is often silenced and repudiated, as a

troublesome suppliant may be; and religious faith is destroyed with the irrevocableness of a **shipwreck** when conscience is rejected.

Ver. 20. Two men in Ephesus are mentioned by name as having been guilty of this. **Hymenæus**, who may be identified with the heretic alluded to in 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18, and **Alexander**, whom we cannot certainly identify. **Whom I delivered**—either by apostolic authority or indirectly through the action of the Church, under his direction (1 Cor. v. 1–5). **Unto Satan.**—It was not only a Jewish belief that Satan was allowed power to inflict bodily disease, but it was a doctrine alluded to by our Lord and His Apostles (Luke xiii. 16; 2 Cor. xii. 7). The object of such chastisement, which followed on Church discipline, was the reformation of offenders, **that they might be taught not to blaspheme.** A pure communion is the essence of the Church's strength.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. The word **therefore** carries us back to the charge referred to in i. 18. **First of all.**—R. V. properly connects this with **I exhort.** The exhortation was of primary importance, because prayers for men in general, and for kings in particular, were likely to become less earnest during a period disturbed by persecution or by party feeling. **Supplications** are the cries of conscious want; **prayers**, the utterances of solemn devotion which can be addressed to God alone; **intercessions**, prayers for others. **Thanksgivings** are to be associated with

all these, because of good already received and evils already averted. **For all men** — whether Christians, Jews, or heathen, an implicit condemnation of exclusiveness.

Ver. 2. After this general exhortation, mention is made of some who had special need. **Kings.**—The plural form is used to make the command universal. Even the Jews had been taught this duty (Jer. xxix. 7). Reverence for law should be characteristic of a Christian (Rom. xiii. 1–7). **That we may lead** = because, in answer to prayer God will guide our rulers (Prov. xxi. 1). **A tranquil and quiet life.**—How different from the fanatical striving for a crown of martyrdom which marked a later period of the Church's history. **In all godliness and gravity**—the right dispositions towards God and towards men, respectively.

Ver. 3. Motives for obedience. **This is good** in itself, displaying the true Christian spirit, **and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour** (i. 1). The argument is, that as God wills that all men should be saved, we ought to pray for all. We are to broaden out our sympathies towards the breadth of God's, and this is most natural to us when we are on our knees.

Ver. 4. That God's desire to save is unlimited is shown by Rom. viii. 32, xi. 32; Titus ii. 11. But salvation is only possible to those who accept its terms, **and come to the knowledge of the truth**—the "full knowledge" (*ἐπιγνωσις*, not *γνῶσις*), which includes faith, love, and obedience.

Ver. 5. **For there is one God, one Mediator also.**—The unity of God, who made all nations, and of the Mediator, who represented the whole race, is mentioned as an evidence that all men are included in the Divine

scheme of redemption. **Himself man**—not merely "a man," but the Representative of humanity, the Second Adam.

Ver. 6. **A ransom for all**—redeeming life by life. **The testimony** that there is one Mediator, who gave Himself a ransom for all. **To be borne in its own times**—by the apostles and teachers of the Church.

Ver. 7. Of these Paul was himself one, and he now alludes to his calling of God as a proof of the universality of Divine grace. **I was**—not "I am," as in A. V.—**appointed preacher**—the general term which was applicable to all messengers of the Gospel. **And an apostle**—an office which gave him the authority he claimed. **I speak the truth, I lie not.**—This solemn adjuration the Apostle found to be necessary, because his claims were repudiated and he himself misjudged. **A teacher of the Gentiles**—a fact which gave special force to his command that prayer should be made for all men. **In faith and truth.**—His faith in Christ, and his hold on the truth revealed in Him, were the means by which he fulfilled his commission.

Ver. 8. **Therefore** connects this command with vers. 1–3, after the digression in vers. 4–7. **That the men,** as distinguished from the women, who were not to lead public prayer in the Ephesian Church. At the same time, the general term "men" indicates that prayer-leading was not left to officials. **In every place.**—The Jewish notion of sanctity, so far as it depended on special locality, was abolished. **Lifting up**—an attitude customary among the Jews in taking oaths, in giving benedictions, and in offering prayers (Psalm lxiii. 4). **Holy hands**—unstained by evil deeds (Psalm xxiv. 4, xxvi. 6; James iv. 8). **Without wrath or disputing**—the latter being the outward expression

of the former. The A. V. and margin of R. V. has "doubting," *i.e.*, disputing with God, a temper adverse to acceptable prayer (Mark xi. 24; James i. 6, 7).

Ver. 9. **In like manner** (I desire) **that women**—who worshipped with men in Christian assemblies, instead of being confined to their own court, as Jewesses were in the Temple. The reference here is to their conduct and adornment in the place of prayer. Their recent emancipation from certain restraints characteristic of Oriental life made these wise counsels absolutely necessary. They were to adorn themselves in a spirit of bashful modesty, **in modest apparel**, avoiding anything in dress or manner which betokened levity or was likely to arouse unholy desire. **With shamefastness**—a good old Saxon word, almost obsolete, but revived in R. V. In the edition of 1611 the word "shamefacedness" was unfortunately substituted. Shamefastness signifies a shrinking from all that was indelicate; **and sobriety** denotes the habit of mind which ensues on continued self-restraint. **Gold or pearls.**—Among the Ephesian converts some were evidently rich enough to possess these. **Costly raiment** (Matt. xi. 8). Compare with this verse, Isaiah iii. 16–23; 1 Peter iii. 3.

Ver. 10. **Professing godliness**, a phrase peculiar to the Pastoral Epistles. **Good works**—such as Dorcas was distinguished for—are the best ornaments of devout womanhood.

Ver. 11. **Let a woman learn in quietness, with all subjection.**—The reference is still to the public assemblies, where women were not to teach (1 Cor. xiv. 34). This had been the rule in Jewish Synagogues, and was still useful in the state of society existing in Ephesus and in

other great Gentile cities. In judging of such passages, we shall see their wisdom more clearly if we take the standpoint occupied by modern missionaries among the women converts of India.

Ver. 12. **But I permit not a woman to teach**, *i.e.*, in the public assemblies at Ephesus. Even in those days women did teach, and God blessed their words (Acts xviii. 26). **Nor to have dominion over a man.**—The reference is not to the husband only, but to the general relation of the sexes, in which the man is the head of the woman, two reasons for which the Apostle proceeds to give, both being drawn from Genesis.

Ver. 13. It is clear that the Old Testament narrative was regarded by Paul as an inspired utterance. **Adam was first formed.**—Compare 1 Cor. xi. 9. Adam and Eve were prototypes of manly and of womanly nature.

Ver. 14. **Adam was not beguiled**, as Eve was, by the Serpent, although he was misled by her. From this fact the Apostle infers that woman is more susceptible to guile and persuasion.

Ver. 15. **But she shall be saved through the child-bearing.**—For the interpretation of this we must turn to Gen. iii. 16. The sentence on woman was twofold. She was to be in subjection to the man, and she was to bring forth children in sorrow. But this was transformed into a means of blessing. As man found his redemption partly in his appointed work, so woman found it partly in the patient endurance of her trial and in the faithful discharge of her motherly functions. And the whole world found redemption in the Seed of the woman, who was born that He might bruise the Serpent's head. Yet the condition of redemption, whether of man or of woman,

is stated here—**if they continued in faith and love, and sanctification with sobriety.**

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1. The Apostle now begins to describe the qualifications needed by various officers in the Christian Church, for such a statement would be of inestimable value to Timothy. **If a man seeketh the office of a bishop.**—It seems strange that there should be any desire for what must have been a post of danger. But the conduct of Diotrephes shows that a love of pre-eminence asserted itself in apostolic days. Some were too little sensible of the responsibilities of office. Others were full of zeal, but wanted the guidance and control here proffered. A bishop was at first the chief pastor of a church, and the title was synonymous with presbyter. The latter title was the earlier in use, having been naturally transferred to the Christian assembly from the Jewish; but it was superseded by ἐπίσκοπος, which was already familiar to Greeks from political usage. **A good work.**—It was to be regarded as a "work," not as a dignity, for it was difficult though honourable.

Ver. 2. The qualifications mentioned concern the daily life. There is no allusion to the higher gifts of the Spirit, which no Christian should lack, and a bishop least of all. **Without reproach.**—Stress is justly laid on reputation in the world and in the Church. Character alone was not sufficient. **The husband of one wife.**—This certainly does not ordain that a bishop must marry, for probably Paul himself and Timothy were unmarried; but

it is distinctly opposed to the rule of celibacy. If the meaning is that the bishop is not to have more than one wife, the question arises, Is this precept levelled at polygamy? That it is applicable to it no one can doubt; but polygamy was so seldom practised in Greek and Roman cities, that we incline to the opinion that Paul was thinking of the corrupt facility of divorce which prevailed, so that a man might have a woman as his wife while former wives were still living. **Given to hospitality** (Rom. xii. 13; Heb. xiii. 2; 1 Peter iv. 9). The importance of this duty was great in those days, when means of communication were limited, and accommodation for guests was infrequent, and persecution assailed those who harboured the evangelists. **Apt to teach** = able and willing.

Ver. 3. These sins appear to lie outside the category of those to which a prominent Christian would be tempted. But we must remember the impulsive vehemence of the Oriental character, and the half-Christianised morality of the early Church. The history of some of the early ecclesiastical councils more than justifies these warnings. **Not contentious** = not cursed by a wrangling temper, which provokes discord. **No lover of money** (Luke xvi. 14).

Ver. 4. **One that ruleth well his own house.**—His household, consisting perhaps of slaves as well as of children, was to be a church on a small scale. **In subjection**—as opposed to the lawlessness of a family each member of which does what is right in his own eyes. Eli's family was a sad example of what Paul dreaded. **With all gravity**—the reference here is to the father, not to the children.

Ver. 6. **Not a novice,** *i.e.*, a man recently converted,

whose faith had not become deep-rooted in the soil of knowledge. There was no necessity to appoint these in the Church at Ephesus, for it had been established more than twelve years. With Paul it was not a question of youth, but of inexperience in the Christian life. **Puffed up**—at the notion of being more exalted than older Christians. **He fall into the condemnation of the devil**—a passage from which we may infer that the devil was punished for pride.

Ver. 7. **He must have good testimony from them that are without.**—It was not enough to be blameless among his fellow-Christians. If he had been notorious for vice, and had recently been converted, until he had won a reputation for holiness among his former associates, it would be unwise to appoint him to high office in the Church. **Lest he fall into reproach**—as one suspected of sin; for this would depress him, and make him more liable to fall into **the snare of the devil.** A man who is regarded as evil is more likely to become evil. A good reputation is a Divine safeguard, which should be jealously maintained for our own sake and for the sake of others.

Ver. 8. **Deacons**—required much the same qualifications as bishops; indeed, the duties of the two offices were not accurately defined, and sometimes overlapped each other. **Grave**—serious, not flippant in speech and demeanour. **Not double-tongued**—*ad alios alia loquentes* (Bengel). Passing from house to house in their visitations, they might be tempted to this. **Not given to much wine**—a characteristic not less required of a Christian teacher in our own day. **Not greedy of filthy lucre**—they had special opportunities for appropriating money intrusted to them for the relief of the poor.

Ver. 9. **Holding the mystery of the faith**—the truth

once hidden, but now revealed, which could only be understood by faith. This, which they had already received, they were to hold, as it only could be held, **in a pure conscience**—a golden casket for a priceless treasure. For the association of faith and conscience, see also i. 19.

Ver. 10. These were to be **proved** by the preceding tests before appointment to office.

Ver. 11. All **women** should possess the characteristics mentioned here, but particularly those of them who are prominent in the Church, whether as "wives" (A. V.) of deacons or as deaconesses. **Not slanderers**—envy and rivalry lead to this sin. **Faithful in all things**—small as well as great, in the home as well as in the Church.

Ver. 12. Care for their own children would prepare for the care of the poor and sick in the Church, with whom they had specially to do.

Ver. 13. Reward for faithful service is not left out of consideration by New Testament writers. It is a legitimate and God-given motive, peculiarly helpful in the formation of right habits. **A good standing**—not so much in the hierarchical order as in their own spiritual life, and in the bliss accompanying its development here and hereafter. **Great boldness** is fostered by a clear conscience, and by the consciousness of an unblemished reputation, on which the Apostle has been strongly insisting.

Ver. 14. **These things write I unto thee**—in addition to general instructions given *vivâ voce*, **hoping** = although I hope—**to come unto thee shortly** = sooner perhaps than I expect, and sooner than these written instructions may lead thee to expect.

Ver. 15. **The house of God.**—The Church is so de-

signated because God owns it, built it, dwells in it, and will complete it. **The Church of the living God** suggests a contrast with the splendid Temple of Diana in Ephesus, which enshrined a dead image. It is much disputed whether **the pillar and ground of the truth** refers to the Church, as R. V. implies, or to the religious truth, described in the next verse, on which the Church rests.

Ver. 16. The six clauses of this verse appear in the original in a form so metrical and euphonious that they formed not improbably a hymn or a form of creed. The word "God" appearing in A. V. is properly omitted in R. V. as resting on "no sufficient ancient evidence." **He who was manifested in the flesh** (1 John i. 2). **Justified in the spirit.**—Compare Luke vii. 35. The meaning is that the Lord Jesus was justified in His claims; was proved to be what He was by the Spirit, who dwelt in Him (John iii. 34), and raised Him from the dead (Rom. i. 4). **Seen of angels**—who ministered to Him throughout His earthly life (Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43). **Preached among the nations.**—Observe the contrast between the holy angels and the sinful nations —the two extremes meeting in Christ. **Believed on in the world.**—The result of the preaching (2 Thess. i. 10). **Received up in glory**—at His ascension (Luke xxiv. 51; Acts i. 9–11).

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. **But**=notwithstanding the glorious truth just alluded to, **the Spirit speaketh expressly.** The spirit of

prophecy spoke under the new as distinctly as under the old dispensation, indicating the wisest plans for service (Acts xvi. 6), and warning of impending dangers (Acts xx. 23). Both to the apostles and to other teachers a coming apostasy had been foretold (2 Peter iii. 2, 3; 1 John ii. 18; Jude 18). **Later times**—not equivalent to "the last days" in 2 Tim. iii. 1; the reference is to the period which shortly followed that in which Paul was writing, which was notorious for its heresies. **Seducing spirits**—which inspired false prophets, in opposition to the Holy Spirit, who led Christians into all truth (John xvi. 13). **Doctrines of devils.**—not respecting devils, but emanating from them. The apostles taught that heathendom was ruled by unseen but personal powers of darkness.

Ver. 2. **Through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies.**—Evil spirits influence men through their fellows (2 Peter ii. 1). **Branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron.**—It was the custom to brand criminals, and these false teachers are represented as bearing the mark of their own guilt on their conscience. But we must not overlook the effect of branding. It not only marked the criminal, but it destroyed his sensibility wherever his flesh was seared. Conscience, often touched, becomes seared into callousness; and thus it was with these heretics.

Ver. 3. **Forbidding to marry.**—The Essenes had done this, and the Gnostics, "in later times" than those of the Apostle, did so too, though on different grounds; for they maintained that marriage was an institution of the Demiurge. They also commanded **to abstain from meats**, because they held that materials for the nourishment of the body had their source in the principle of evil. These heresies were as yet only in germ, and still elude the

search of the ecclesiastical historian, but were even then discernible to an inspired apostle. **Which God created.**—It is a cardinal doctrine of Christianity that all things are of God, and will be for man's welfare if **received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth**; an important limitation, for it checks the immoderate or improper use of anything.

Ver. 4. From the special case just mentioned, Paul, according to his wont, announces a universal principle. **Every creature** or created thing **is good** (see Romans xiv. 14-20, Acts x. 15).

Ver. 5. **For it is sanctified.**—Its holiness is not inherent, but depends on the spirit in which it is used. **Through the Word of God and prayer.**—The reference does not appear to be merely to a special command, such as Gen. i. 29, but to the prayer and thanksgiving used by early Christians over their food, consisting as these did of the words of Scripture. This custom, if devoutly maintained, may transform a common meal into a sacrament. Conybeare quotes from the Apostolical Constitutions vii. 49, a beautiful specimen of the ancient forms of thanksgiving—"Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast fed me from my youth; who givest food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that, having always all sufficiency, we may abound unto all good works in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom be unto Thee, honour, glory, and power, for ever and ever—Amen."

Ver. 6. **These things**—iii. 14 to iv. 5. Error is best met by presentation of the truth, not by angry rebuke. **Nourished in the words of the faith.**—Growth and nurture in the divine life depend on God's Word. Man does not live by bread alone (Matt. iv. 4, 1 Pet. ii. 2). "The words of the faith" are the truths of the Gospel.

Ver. 7. **Fables**, or myths, denote abstract speculations, destitute alike of historic reality and of practical usefulness, which the false teachers propagated. They were **profane** or unspiritual in matter, and in manner were silly enough for the gossip of **old wives**. **Exercise thyself unto godliness.**—Aiming at likeness to God, as an ideal still to be attained (Phil. iii. 12-14).

Ver. 8. **Bodily exercise is profitable for a little.**—Increasing, as it does, bodily strength, gaining in the arena crowns of honour, fitting for the rescue of others from danger, &c.; **but godliness is profitable for all things**, affecting the whole man, for time and for eternity.

Ver. 9. **Faithful is the saying.**—That, namely, which has just been mentioned.

Ver. 10. **For to this end.**—The reference is to the future life, which constantly rose before the apostle's mind. **We.**—Paul, Timothy, and those likeminded with them. **Labour and strive.**—In action and in suffering. **The living God** is able to comfort, inspire, and bestow that deathless life which is in Himself. This, however, He can only do because He is **the Saviour**—able to deliver from sin and death. **All men.**—Who are the objects of His yearning love.

Ver. 11. **Command** refers to the practical, **and teach** refers to the theoretical, truths mentioned.

Ver. 12. **Let no man despise thy youth.**—Timothy was so to conduct himself that no one would find occasion for doing this, as they would have done if he had been characterised by jejune utterances and arrogant assumption. He was now between thirty and forty years of age; but some presbyters would be older than he, and yet it would be his duty to instruct and rebuke them. **Be thou an example** (see Titus ii. 7); **in word**—public teaching and

private talk; **in manner of life**—general conduct; **in love, in faith**—the two sources of right speech and act; **in purity**—peculiarly needful in Ephesus.

Ver. 13. **Till I come, give heed to reading.**—From the connection the reference appears to be to the public reading of Scripture (Luke iv. 16, Acts xiii. 15, Coloss. iv. 16).

Ver. 14. **Neglect not the gift that is in thee.**—Even divine gifts perish through disuse. The special gift of Timothy, which fitted him for his appointed work, was given **by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.** This rite was first solemnly performed by Paul himself (2 Tim. i. 6), afterwards by the presbyters. It was a symbol accompanying prayer for the communication of the Holy Ghost (Acts viii. 17, xix. 6).

Ver. 15. **Give thyself wholly to them.**—Mind, and heart, and will were to be devoted to the service of Christ **That thy progress.**—At no period of his life should the greatest saint imagine that he has reached all that is possible to him.

Ver. 16. This closing exhortation is singularly comprehensive. **Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching.**—The inner life and the outward service ever call for prayer and watchfulness. **In doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee**—from error and from sin, and thus share the Saviour's joy.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. **An elder.**—Not used here as an official title. The allusion is to age, Timothy himself being comparatively young. **Rebuke** was not to be administered by him to an older man in severe dogmatic tone, but with the tenderness which a right-minded son would display to his father if he had done wrong. **The younger men as brethren.**—Reproof was not to be withheld from any who deserved it; but tone and manner were to be wisely regulated.

Ver. 2. **The elder women as mothers.**—Home relationships were the types of those which were to prevail in the Church. **Purity** was to be sedulously maintained by watchfulness, not only against moral evil, but against even the appearance of it.

Ver. 3. **Honour.**—Respect as well as help. **Widows indeed.**—Those without children or near relatives, whose duty it would be to support them. The Greek word χήρα expresses the idea of loneliness.

Ver. 4. **Widows**—were among the first objects of the Church's solicitude (Acts vi. 1), and there are indications here, as well as elsewhere, that this Christian charity was abused by some who ought to have been supported by their own relations. Against this the apostle protests. Wisdom in distributing alms is as necessary as generosity in supplying them. **Grandchildren**—properly substituted for "nephews" in A. V.; although the latter phrase formerly indicated "descendants." **Let them**, *i.e.*, the children and grandchildren, learn first **to show piety towards their own family**, including their grandparents, especially those

who were widowed. **This is acceptable in the sight of God** (Mark vii. 10; Eph. vi. 2).

Ver. 5. **Desolate.**—Strengthening the idea in the phrase **widow indeed,** who was without relations able to support her. **Hath her hope set on God,** who alone can help her, and who wills to do so through His Church. **Continueth in supplications**—an allusion probably to Anna as a typical widow (Luke ii. 37).

Ver. 6. **But she that giveth herself to pleasure,** living a life of extravagance and self-indulgence, **is dead while she liveth**—quite a Pauline phrase (Rom. viii. 13).

Ver. 7. **That they**—the widows—**may be without reproach** in the judgment of the Church and of the world.

Ver. 8. The apostle was justly severe in his rebuke of those who neglected their own kin, however good the service they might render to the Church. Fidelity in ecclesiastical duties never compensates for neglect of home claims. **He hath denied the faith**—the Christian faith, the essential principle of which is love, and which enforces home responsibilities instead of releasing from them. **And is worse than an unbeliever,** for many Pagans recognised the duties which are here insisted upon.

Ver. 9. **Let none be enrolled as a widow.**—This can hardly refer to the list of those who were supported out of Church funds, for it would be manifestly uncharitable to exclude the necessitous on the ground of youth; and it would be unwise also, for it might drive them into sin. Nor would it be just to refuse help to a widow who had possibly never had any opportunity for performing the duties specified in the next verse. There seems to have been a recognised class of widows, who occupied a different and superior position to that taken by most of those who received relief. They had their appointed duties and

received their appointed support. Probably they were employed in training children, in visiting the poor, in aiding those of their own sex, and were similar to, but not to be identified with, the "deaconesses" of the Church. That "widows" became an official designation is evident from Tertullian's allusion to "a virgin under twenty years of age, who was in the widowhood." In the days of Paul this institution existed in germ, although there was not the sharp definition of ecclesiastical classes and offices which subsequently prevailed. **Under threescore years old**—an age at which she was not likely to marry again—**having been the wife of one man.**—See our note on iii. 2.

Ver. 10. **Well-reported of for good works.**—Like Phebe (Rom. xvi. 1, 2), and Tabitha (Acts ix. 36), and others who followed in the footsteps of the women who ministered unto the Lord (Luke viii. 2, 3). **If she hath brought up children**—of her own, or of others. **Hospitality to strangers.**—An Oriental custom which Christianity made more binding and sacred. **Washed the saints' feet.**—Compare Luke vii. 44–47; John xiii. 1–15. **The afflicted**—the poor, the sick, and the troubled. **Every good work** within the limits of her capacity and opportunity.

Ver. 11. **Younger widows refuse**—if they apply to be put upon the special list; although they would certainly not be allowed to starve for want of support. Their temptations were terrible in a city like Ephesus, especially after the miserable training of their girlhood. To understand these we must think of a young widow in India rather than in England.

Ver. 12. **Having condemnation**—not "damnation," as A. V. **Their first faith**—means the vow which they would implicitly or explicitly take on entering the order of

"widowhood;" that they would devote themselves exclusively to Christ, and to His Church—a virtual engagement not to marry again.

Ver. 13. **Idle.**—Neglecting appointed duties. **Going about from house to house**—"gadding about," as we say, without good cause; a temptation which would be strengthened by the introductions to many homes, which their office would give. **Tattlers also and busybodies**—retailing gossip and interfering with the affairs of others (2 Thess. iii. 11). These words are severe, and ought not to be regarded as universally or even generally true; but as being vividly descriptive of certain cases which would be instantly recognised by Timothy, and by the Church at Ephesus.

Ver. 14. **I desire therefore.**—(Chap. ii. 8, note).—**Marry**—*i.e.*, a second time (as in 1 Cor. vii. 39), if opportunity and inclination concurred. **Bear children.**—The word implies not merely the birth of children, but their nurture; and the apostle's desire would be fulfilled by those who were wisely bringing up their step-children. **Rule the household.**—What a contrast all this presents to the conventual morality of later times! **The adversary.**—The opponent of Christianity on the look-out for occasion **of reviling.**

Ver. 15. **Some**—young widows in Ephesus—**are turned aside after Satan**—into heresy, or into immorality, or into marriage with heathen.

Ver. 16. The duty insisted upon in verse 4 is here enforced, especially on believing women, on whom the claims of the family were prior to those of the Church.

Ver. 17. A new subject is begun here, namely, the proper treatment of worthy and of unworthy teachers. **The elders that rule well**—men of eminent ability,

earnestness, and devoutness—**be counted worthy of double honour**, not necessarily "of double income"—**especially those who labour**, the original implies that these worked specially hard as preachers, **in the word**—hortatory discourse, **and in teaching** — instruction catechetical and didactic. It is clear that in apostolic days all elders did not discharge the same duties. Some ruled, who did not teach; and others taught who did not rule. Such variety and flexibility are unhappily lost in the present day.

Ver. 18. The apostle illustrates his point by quoting Deut. xxv. 4, a passage which he explains more fully in 1 Cor. ix. 9. **The labourer is worthy of his hire.**—This phrase is not found in the Old Testament. It was a proverbial expression quoted by our Lord (Luke x. 7).

Ver. 19. **An elder** here denotes an official, a "presbyter." Against such an one Timothy was not to heed unsupported charges, which might originate in envy or in revenge, and yet might disturb his own mind, and his relations with him, painfully and needlessly. The old law of evidence was a wise one, and was always to be followed in cases of this kind (Deut. xvii. 6, Heb. x. 28). Our Lord Himself confirmed it (Matt. xviii. 15–17).

Ver. 20. **Them that sin**—among the elders, to whom the apostle is referring—**reprove in the sight of all.**—Their public position required this public repudiation of their wickedness, at least in the case of all sins which were gross enough to be scandals. We need not suppose that all their failings were so dealt with, or that past misconduct was dragged into publicity; for the present tense implies that they were continuing in wrong-doing. ("They that sin" = "they that are sinning.")

Ver. 21. This solemn charge, in which Timothy is reminded of God's presence and help, was peculiarly

suited to stimulate him to watchfulness and encourage him to faithfulness. **The elect angels** may mean those among the heavenly hierarchy who are employed in connection with the human race. **Without prejudice**—*i.e.*, without hasty or preconceived judgment; **doing nothing by partiality**—using a magnifying-glass for some men's faults, and a microscope for those of others.

Ver. 22. **Lay hands.**—The allusion is to the ordination of presbyters, which was to be the outcome of previous thought and prayer, instead of being done **hastily: neither be partaker of other men's sins.** Timothy would naturally feel himself responsible for having extended the range of a bad man's evil influence, if he raised him thoughtlessly to any position of prominence. **Keep thyself pure.**—Emphasis is laid upon the pronoun, for the evangelist's own character and reputation were more important in proportion to his influence over others.

Ver. 23. This unexpected counsel has about it all the marks of authenticity. Only in a genuine private letter, such as this, would a writer interject a word of loving thoughtfulness, which suddenly occurred to his mind, in the midst of more important subjects. Timothy, with his ascetic tendency, had given up the use of all beverages but water, no doubt with a wish to protest against the excesses of others. But his rigid abstinence was, in Paul's opinion, affecting his health, and was possibly being made use of by those who taught the heresies mentioned in iv. 3 in favour of their theories.

Ver. 24. The next two verses contain a general statement of fact which would help Timothy in his appointments of suitable officers in the Church. **Some men's sins are evident.**—These men are constantly condemning themselves, and for them no special foresight is required,

because a glance reveals what manner of men they are—their sins **going before unto judgment**—like heralds proclaiming their character—"crying sins," we still call them; **and some men also they follow after.**—Their sins are not known till after condemnation has been pronounced.

Ver. 25. Happily what is true of evil deeds is also true of good deeds. They will all be manifested, though not all in the same way, nor at the same time. **There are good works that are evident**—known from the hour of their being done—**and such as are otherwise cannot be hid.** In God's good time they also will be revealed (Matt. x. 26).

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1. From the officers of the Church the apostle turns to various classes of people represented in the Christian community. **Servants under the yoke**—*i.e.*, slaves in general; and not those only who were treated with exceptional severity. Slavery itself was a heavy yoke to bear. Converted slaves might naturally suppose that their relationship to their masters was greatly altered by their Christian profession. They might resent authority, or try to escape from the yoke. But the apostle, in spite of his well-known love of liberty, urged them to submission and obedience (1 Cor. vii. 21; Eph. vi. 5; Col. iii. 22; Titus ii. 9). A servile war might have been easily provoked, but it would have proved disastrous to liberty. **Worthy of all honour.**—A repetition of the phrase used in ver. 17, which confirms our interpretation

of it. **The doctrine** = the Divine Gospel (Titus ii. 10). More than their own reputation was concerned. Their disorderliness and rebellion would cause their faith to be **blasphemed** (2 Sam. xii. 14).

Ver. 2. If slaves had **believing masters**—they were not to **despise** them, withholding signs of respect and acts of obedience; but to **serve them** all the more readily, because in that case **they that partake of the benefit**, who had the advantage of their service, **are believing** in Christ, **and beloved** of God (Philemon 10–16).

Ver. 3. This verse implies that false teachers had already been misleading the Christian slaves. **Sound words** are healthy words, free from morbid sentimentalism.

Ver. 4. **He is puffed up, knowing nothing.**—Pride is a source of intellectual and moral blindness. A man who is sure that he knows is incapacitated for learning. **Doting about questionings.**—Having a diseased appetite for idle speculations and fruitless controversies. **Envy** of other men, whose influence or ability may be greater.

Ver. 5. **Men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth.**—Moral corruption is an abyss from which steal up the mists which hide spiritual truth—**supposing that godliness is a way of gain**—hypocritically abusing their Christian profession and gifts for selfish ends, and making their connection with the Church a lucrative business. Simon Magus was a type of these (Acts viii. 18–24).

Ver. 6. Still godliness is not without its reward. The false teachers were in error, because they confined their view to material advantages, and to the present life. **But godliness with contentment**—which springs from it—**is great gain.**

Ver. 7. The transient nature of worldly things is

given as one reason why we should be content with what we have of them. They are never a property, but only a loan to be given up at call. **We brought nothing into this world** (Job i. 21)—**for neither can we carry anything out** (Psalm xlix. 17; Luke xii. 20).

Ver. 8. A second reason for contentment is that our real wants are fewer than many imagine. **Having food and covering**—the latter is a better word than "raiment," in A. V., because it includes the idea of shelter. **We shall be therewith content**—that is, if we are reasonable men.

Ver. 9. The third reason urged for contentment is that its opposite leads to misery and sin. **They that desire to be rich**—whose wills are set on that as an end—**fall into a temptation** to gain wealth unjustly, **and a snare**, which holds them in captivity to evil.

Ver. 10. **A root of all kinds of evil.**—Though covetousness is more prolific of evils than most sins, it is not, as A. V. asserts, "the root of all evil," and the apostle did not state that it was. **Have pierced themselves through** (see Luke ii. 35) **with many sorrows**, anxieties, disappointments, and pangs of conscience.

Ver. 11. Again Paul turns to Timothy. **But thou, O man of God.**—The title would remind him that he was set for the defence of the faith, as truly as one of the old prophets, who were pre-eminent for their freedom from luxury and from covetousness. **And follow after.**—We avoid evil by following good (Rom. xii. 21). The strong man armed can only be driven out by one stronger than he (Luke xi. 22). **Righteousness** = integrity. **Godliness** = the tendency of life towards God. **Faith** and **love**—the primal virtues of a Christian. **Patience**—which conquers all that frets and disturbs the soul. **Meekness**—which

does not permit the wrong-doing of others to embitter the heart.

Ver. 12. **Fight the good fight**—a familiar figure in Paul's writings (i. 18; 2 Tim. iv. 7; Ephesians vi. 10–17)—**of faith**, not only on behalf of the faith, but with the strength inspired by faith. **Lay hold on the life eternal**—as an athlete lays hold, with eagerness and vigour; **whereunto thou wast called**—a fact which would not only inspire him to effort, but would cheer him with the certainty of winning, because God Himself had proffered the prize. **And didst confess.**—The reference is probably to the time when Timothy was solemnly set apart to his work.

Ver. 13. This confession reminds the apostle of that witnessed by **Christ Jesus who before**, *i.e.* in the presence of, **Pontius Pilate.** See John xviii. 33–37. God is described as He **who quickeneth all things**, to remind Timothy that life and death were in His hands, and that death need never be feared, because eternal life lay beyond it.

Ver. 14. **The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ**—was expected with eager hope by the apostles. Though the horizon of the Church has been enlarging with her advance through the ages, yet the coming of Christ is still her hope.

Ver. 15. **He shall shew.**—The Father will give that glorious manifestation of His Son, in His own time and way. This mention of God calls forth a psalm of thanksgiving from His servant who adores Him as **the blessed and only Potentate**—Himself the source of highest joy to His creatures, **the King of kings and Lord of lords** in this world and in all worlds.

Ver. 16. **Who only hath immortality**—being exalted

far above all transient things; **dwelling in light unapproachable** (Psalm civ. 2; 1 John i 5). **Whom no man hath seen, nor can see**—a phrase which involves the idea of His incomprehensibility (John i. 18; Coloss. i. 15; 1 John iv. 12). **To whom be honour and power eternal**—for to Him alone these by right belong. Here the Epistle might have been closed, but there were yet one or two truths too important to be left untouched.

Ver. 17. Having alluded to those who were seeking wealth, the apostle has a message for those who possessed it. **Charge them that are rich in this present world**—though they might also be rich towards God. In order to be so they needed this exhortation—**that they be not high-minded** (Jer. ix. 23); **who giveth us richly all things**; so that we have no occasion for boastfulness, as though our own skill, or industry, had won them for us. They are the gifts of our Father's love, **to enjoy**, but not to rest our hopes in.

Ver. 18. The right way of using wealth is here set forth. To **do good** is to promote the happiness of others —to be **rich in good works** requires a rich man to undertake what he might prefer leaving to others who are in a different social position. Those **ready to distribute** are free and generous in their gifts, and those **willing to communicate** gladly share with others what God has bestowed on them.

Ver. 19. This will promote the eternal interests of God's faithful servants. It is true that eternal life is the gift of God, and cannot be won by any meritorious works on our part; but the degree of its blessedness will be affected by everything which enlarges and ennobles life here. If indeed a man is charitable for the sake of getting recompense hereafter, he must fail in his

aim, because his selfish motive vitiates his charity and makes it worthless. But love grows by use, and growth is not interrupted by death. (Compare Luke xvi. 9.)

Ver. 20. Again Paul sums up his letter with an earnest appeal. **That which is committed unto thee**—the Gospel of Christ Jesus, as opposed to the **profane babblings** already referred to; **the knowledge which is falsely so-called**, which soon became more distinctly, but more erroneously, called "the knowledge," in the "Gnostic" heresy.

Ver. 21. **Some professing**—to seek salvation in knowledge, lose that which can only come through faith.

SERMONETTES ON FIRST CHAPTER.

I.

THE APOSTLE'S CLAIM TO AUTHORITY.

(1 Tim. i. 1.)

The beginning of this Epistle is so formal and solemn that it is evidently intended to give a tone of authority to all that follows. If Paul had merely wished to express his affection for his "own son in the faith," or had intended giving him judicious advice which would have been important for himself alone, he would not have begun by calling attention to a fact which Timothy already knew, that he was an "apostle" who had been summoned to service by a call that was divine. He begins by describing—

I. His Office as being that of "an apostle of Jesus Christ." He often laid stress upon his apostleship, and not without good reason, for if it had not been recognised he would have been powerless to mould the Churches, which by God's blessing he had been enabled to form. The truth of the Gospel was in his view not a matter of conjecture, but of revelation. It did not vary according to the prejudices of the hearers, or the imagination of the preachers, but it was an authoritative declaration of man's sinfulness, of divine mercy, of an accepted atonement, of an actual resurrection; doctrines and facts which were

largely outside the range of ordinary observation and experience. The historical events referred to were, no doubt, matters of testimony; but their meaning and their effects on the spiritual life of believers, and on the future destiny of the world, were made known by the Holy Spirit to chosen men who were empowered and commissioned to bear witness to others. Such authority as the apostles had was based on their personal intercourse with the Lord Jesus, which in the case of Paul was given after His resurrection from the dead. He had seen the Lord, spoken to Him, received teaching and authority from Him, and regarded himself as being, and boldly claimed to be, His delegate, or ambassador, appointed to speak in His name. "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me," said our Lord, and it was with firm though humble confidence in this assurance that the apostles spoke and wrote.

No doubt there was something unique about the apostolate—so that no Christians can fairly claim to have succeeded the apostles in their peculiar office, which was essential to the Church before the Gospels and Epistles had been collected. But there is still an authority legitimately belonging to all who have tasted, handled, and felt of the good Word of Life; which enables them to speak with confidence, and to claim boldly the attention and belief of their fellow-men. Communion with God, for example, is, in its own sphere, as much a reality as the operation of any natural force, whose effects we may trace upon visible things. God draws the soul of the believer near to Himself, and keeps it near as truly as the sun, by the force of gravitation, keeps the earth from flying into

space, and losing itself in the awful void. With as much certainty and confidence as a man can say, "I have warmed myself at the fire," the Christian may say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father; and this is our testimony concerning Him, God is light and God is love."

Apostles are still wanted by the world, and Christians ought not to speak either with faltering voice or with apologetic tone. The confidence of the Church must be strengthened before the world will submit to its teaching. The whole tone of society in the present day, the atmosphere we are all breathing, imperceptible as it is, tends to weaken the vigour of our confidence in the certitude of things believed. Doubtless it affects us in different degrees according to our tendency either to intellectual pride or to affectionate trust (for Thomas as well as John is still found among the disciples), but it influences us all more or less. In Colorado there grows a shrub called popularly the Poison Oak, which is regarded with horror by the inhabitants. Some people are completely prostrated by merely breathing near it, and a scratch from one of its prickly leaves will produce boils and sores which they find extremely difficult to cure; though others, curiously enough, seem uninjured by it: just as I have known some stricken down by erysipelas who have merely sat in a room where arnica and water stood unperceived in a saucer, while others may freely apply it as a healing lotion. We do not know why the virus is harmful to one and harmless to another, and none of our scientists are able to explain the secret, or to foretell, without experiment, who will be harmed and

who will not. But the fact is unquestionable; and in the higher sphere the phenomenon repeats itself in the observed influence of a sceptical tone in society, which leaves one unscathed but prostrates another under the bane of infidelity. Yet out of this good will come, however little we foresee it, just as from the fatal poison oak is gained the *rhus toxicodendron* which, used aright, has cured many a hurt and sprain. Watching against the insidious influence of unbelief, let us hold fast our confidence, as the apostles did who dared to speak with authority, and to this end let us put up their prayer, "Lord, increase our faith."

II. St. Paul refers here not only to his office as "an apostle of Jesus Christ," but also to THE BASIS ON WHICH HIS APPOINTMENT RESTED—namely, "the commandment of God our Saviour."

This reference may be to the well-known incident which occurred in Antioch, when the Christians were assembled for fasting and prayer, and the Holy Ghost said (probably through a conviction overwhelmingly felt by them all), "Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, they sent them away;" and thus began Paul's first missionary journey. But this special call was dependent upon an earlier event which occurred in Damascus, when the Lord said to Ananias respecting Saul, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

Nothing could give a man more courage than belief

in such a divine call. It sustained that noble hero, General Gordon, amidst difficulties and perils which made his life an epic poem; indeed, in all ages the men who have had that belief have dared and done the mightiest deeds. Turn over the pages of history and you will see that the invincible Ironsides—the dauntless pilgrim founders of the new world—the noblest evangelists and fathers of the early Churches, were all victorious because each said to himself, "I am here by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope." And going back farther still in Church history, we see Jeremiah standing amidst his persecutors like a brazen wall and a defenced city; Daniel defying the wrath of the king, without a sign of braggadocio, or of any seeming consciousness of his nobility; and Elijah opposing the court, the hierarchy, and the fanatical people—without a tremor, because he looked beyond them all, and spoke of "the Lord God of Israel, before whom I stand." In order that this conviction may be ours we must not run before we are sent; we must never throw ourselves into work without prayer; we must carry out our plans with a prayerful belief that they are God's, and that if they are not we should willingly see them broken into fragments. If we take up work which is given to us of God, being revealed to us as ours because it is near, suited to our capacity, responsive to desires kindled by prayer, and necessary to be done, we shall have strength for its duties, counsel amid its perplexities, and success far beyond our expectation and desert.

III. Here we may encourage ourselves, as Paul did, by remembering THE GIVER OF THIS OFFICE AND WORK. The expression "God, our Saviour" is frequent in the pastoral Epistles, but is only met with elsewhere in Jude's doxology, and in Mary's Magnificat. Probably Paul used it here with a special view to certain false teaching which was springing up in the Christian Church at this period. Presumptuous and self-willed men were beginning to regard Christianity (as some regard it now) as being only a higher form of moral instruction and of spiritual discipline than was to be met with in the Pagan and Jewish religions, or in the philosophical schools. Here they were reminded that men want "salvation" as well as instruction, and that this salvation is of God and not of man; that the mode of pardon is divinely provided; and that redemption from iniquity, and finally from mortality, finds its source in the love and power of our Divine Father.

Equally suggestive is the phrase, "the Lord Jesus Christ, our *hope;*" reminding us, as it does, not only that the reception of Christ into the heart inspires us with hope of blessing, but also that all that is hoped for is indissolubly linked with Christ Himself. It is not our own desert; it is not any Church organisation or ordinance; it is not any creed, which expresses human conceptions of truth; still less is it any fellow-man; but it is our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us and rose again, who is our hope.

Thus we are brought, at the very beginning of this Epistle, to recognise our Lord as coequal with the Father

in the bestowal of divine and spiritual gifts. He is the hope of the Church. We may fear lest the stream dry up and leave us thirsty; but then we think of the rains which feed its sources, and when we are fearful lest the clouds should fail, we remember the limitless ocean whence they are fed, and in its exhaustlessness we find rest to our souls. Out of His fulness, which is infinite, have we all received, grace for grace.

II.

THE RELATIONS OF PAUL AND TIMOTHY.

(1 Tim. i. 2.)

Although this Epistle was an authoritative utterance to be implicitly obeyed, it was characterised by the graceful and loving freedom which might be expected in a letter to a friend so familiar and so beloved as Timothy.

This young evangelist was now at Ephesus, carrying on, amidst many difficulties, the work which the great Apostle to the Gentiles had begun, but was no longer able personally to carry on. Tares sown by the enemy amidst the wheat were beginning to appear on every side, threatening to choke the growing life of the Church and to spoil the expected harvest. Hence the work Timothy had to do was one of peculiar difficulty and delicacy.

He not only had to run great risk from the hostility of the fanatical population of Ephesus, which was notorious for its idolatry and profligacy, and proud of being the centre of the worship of Diana, but within the Church he had to face many who by false doctrine, and others who by immoral conduct, threatened its ruin. And, since treachery within is always more dangerous than

hostility without, it was against this that Timothy was armed by the authority and counsel conveyed by our Epistle. He needed the authority it gave him (coming as it did from the founder of the Ephesian Church—the leading teacher of the Gentile Christians), for the evangelist was but young, and lived in an age when youth was less appreciated than it is now, and he was opposed by headstrong and able men, who were ready at one time to despise him, at another to try and drive him from his post. And the advice hereby given was invaluable to him, for he had few Christians to consult, if any; and a sense of loneliness and despondency is apt to assert itself when one has reason to say with Elijah, "I, even I only, am left." To Timothy this feeling was peculiarly natural, for he was of a meek, rather than of an aggressive temper; amiable rather than authoritative; and far more accustomed to follow another's lead than to hew out a path for himself and for others. From the reading of this Epistle he would rise refreshed and encouraged, for he knew that these were the words of one who was not only beloved and trusted as a father, but who was commissioned of God to make known the Divine will.

Hence Paul salutes him as his "own son in the faith," or, as the Revised Version more correctly renders it—"my true child in the faith." The meaning is this—Timothy might have been a genuine child of the kingdom though he had been brought into it by some one else than Paul, but he was Paul's "true child." The phrase was intended to assert explicitly that this young evangelist was one of the apostle's own converts; and grown

man though he now was, the relation between them was so peculiarly tender, and their intimacy had been so great, that Paul writes as a father would to his own son.

To understand this relationship think first of—

I. TIMOTHY'S CONVERSION.—He had been prayerfully taught in the Jewish faith by his mother and grandmother, and was therefore, with them, prepared to receive the Gospel. At last he heard it. Two strangers entered Lystra, one majestic in presence, the other mighty in speech. They were Jews, but they held that Messiah had already come, and they preached of Jesus—of His miracles and words; of His cross and passion; and, strangest of all, of His resurrection from the dead, and ascension to God's right hand. The seed of the kingdom fell into good soil, and it sprang up and brought forth fruit, for Timothy had the "honest and good heart" of which the Lord spoke. And then more startling events occurred. A cripple was healed in the name of Jesus; the whole town was in an uproar of excitement, and the apostles could scarcely keep back the priests and the people from worshipping them as Jupiter and Mercurius. They preached not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. Then, with one of those strange transitions, so frequent with a fanatical Eastern people, adoration was changed into attack, and there is good reason to believe that the lad Timothy saw the brutal assault on Paul, when he was stoned and left for dead outside the city walls. At his impressionable age, such a spectacle of noble heroism and of undeserved cruelty, would set the heart of the young

disciple on fire, and from that moment the two were knit together in an indissoluble bond. No wonder Paul wrote to him as "my true child" in the faith.

II. TIMOTHY'S SETTING APART FOR SPECIAL WORK did not take place until seven years after this. God does not call us to high service until we have proved our fidelity in what is lower. Paul departed from Lycaonia, leaving at least one pious family enriched beyond all expectation, eager to study the Scriptures in the new light received, and to rejoice in Jesus as their hope. Then, as opportunity offered, a little evangelistic work was done in the district by the young convert, so that when Paul revisited the place he found that Timothy had grown in knowledge and grace; in fitness for service, and in good repute amongst all the brethren. We may be sure that it was to Timothy's own trembling delight that he was delegated to be the companion and fellow-worker of the great apostle. The sacred ambition of his life was fulfilled. He was solemnly set apart for the work (for no man in those days lightly undertook it), and by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery he was designated as one on whom the Holy Spirit rested.

Now and then we get a glimpse at TIMOTHY'S HAPPY COMPANIONSHIP with Paul, which was never afterwards broken for any length of time, and which was the more remarkable because of the difference between the ages of the two men. But it is good for the aged to keep the heart young by their association with youth; and it is even better for those who are in the spring-time of their life to yield reverence and love, and considerate kindness,

to those who are older and more experienced than themselves: indeed it is an ill sign when there is resentment of home authority, repudiation of responsibility to the aged, and a wish to have only the companionship of those who live for the pleasures of this life. Let youth and experience walk hand in hand, that we may keep in our hearts, even amid advancing years, the spring of immortal youth.

> "They err who measure life by years,
> With false and foolish tongue;
> Some hearts grow old before their life,
> Others are always young."

Conclusion.—Those of us who, like Timothy, are teachers of others, may learn from the reception of this letter that we need continuous instruction in order to accomplish our ministry. It is not enough that we should begin our work with memories stored with truths, and with hearts consecrated to the Master's service. New circumstances, and growing responsibilities, necessitate what Timothy received—new instructions; and it is our privilege to go to the written Word, and into the presence of the Great Teacher Himself. We may have in our measure the experience of Moses who, on the mount of communion with God, received not only the moral law but also special directions about the details of his work. Therefore when he came down amongst the people he remembered the command—"See that thou make all things after the pattern showed thee on the mount." Our perplexities about Christian doctrine, our difficulties in

dealing with those who have drifted away from the truth, our questionings as to whether we should work here or there, whether we should do this or that, we may take, indeed we must take, into the light of God's presence. The more we lead men the more we ourselves must be led of God.

III.

A CHRISTIAN SALUTATION.

(1 Tim. i. 2.)

The salutation which Paul gives to his own son in the faith is an exquisite example of what a Christian greeting should be. It is no idle compliment, but an earnest prayer. It expresses loving wishes, not for outward and transient blessings, but for those which are inward and abiding. The fellow-Christian who helps us thus towards God does more for us than he who raises us to fortune. His intercessions with God are of more value than introductions to men.

I. The Manifestation of Divine Love desired on Timothy's behalf is threefold, consisting of "grace, mercy, and peace," for the sympathetic mind of Paul analysed and displayed it, much as a prism will catch a ray of sunshine, and reveal more clearly the wonderful beauty that is latent in it.

1. *Grace* is the free favour of God, pouring itself forth upon the soul which is yearning for it, and filling it with gladness and praise. The conscious enjoyment of this is the essence of heaven, the world in which, more fully than is possible on earth, the saints walk all day in the

light of God's countenance; and it is only because earth-born clouds of doubt and sin come between us and Him, that this is not ours already in all its blessedness. So that a prayer for God's "grace" to be with us is really a prayer that our sins and doubts may be dispersed; for as with nature's sunlight, it is not any alteration in the sun, but a change in the earth's atmosphere, or in the earth's attitude towards the sun, that brings brightness in the place of gloom, daylight in the stead of darkness.

2. The association of the idea of *mercy* with grace is striking, and is peculiar to these Epistles to Timothy and to the Second Epistle of John. As it occurs in no other Pauline letters, some critics have used its occurrence here as an argument against Paul's authorship, forgetting that such a change in his ordinary form of salutation would be about the last thing any forger would be likely to make, for the deviation would have been as uncalled for as it would have been obvious. But it was characteristic of Paul, who was profoundly conscious of his own need of "mercy," to pray for it on behalf of his comrade, who was engaged in similar work. It is not to the erring Galatians nor to the backsliding Corinthians, but to this honoured servant of the Christian Church, that he prays for God's "mercy" to be evermore extended; for from his own experience he knew how much that mercy is needed by those who are sensible that their character comes far short of their ideal, and that their work for Christ is marred by their faults and follies. We may occupy the highest position in the Church, yet instead of being thereby exalted above the need of mercy, we must

the more humbly cast ourselves upon it. Nothing but the realisation of the Divine forbearance will embolden us to continue in spiritual service, which is awful in its responsibilities, and likely to be ill done by us through our sinfulness and ignorance. The noblest saint falls back in life and death on Divine mercy as his one and only hope.

3. *Peace* flows from the "grace" and "mercy" of God. It is a sense of reconciliation with Him—of rest in Him, which will give calmness in hours of trouble and peril, and will spread a sacred and happy influence over those around us. He whose heart is consciously right with God, should be in his home and in his business a restful, not a restless centre. As good Bishop Patrick says—"Peace is the proper result of the Christian temper. It is the great kindness which our religion doth us, that it brings us to a settledness of mind and a consistency within ourselves."

II. THE SOURCE OF THESE BLESSINGS is pointed out in the assurance that they flow from "God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

1. *If God is our father* we may surely expect such blessings, for they are just what in our lower sphere we fathers (whose fatherhood is but a broken reflection of His) would gladly give our children. We are not happy unless they are living in our "favour;" we are eager to show them "mercy" directly and whenever they come to us in penitential grief; and if there is one blessing we desire for them above others, it is that their minds may be at "peace." God is our Father, and therefore He is not

unconcerned about us. He never leaves us, as we too often leave the waifs and strays, who are miserable and hopeless in our streets.

2. *But grace, mercy, and peace can only come to us through Jesus Christ our Lord*, because we are undeserving and sinful. They are like the cool water at the bottom of the well; but One stronger than we must roll away the stone, as Jacob did, before the thirsty can drink. Never forget the association here and elsewhere of the Divine Son with the Divine Father, as the coequal source of the blessings which come from God alone. And if you want to confirm your faith in that doctrine, listen to His own words —"All things are delivered unto Me of my Father." And again—"All things that the Father hath are mine." And once more—"For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." "Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

IV.

TIMOTHY'S CHARGE.

(1 Tim. i. 3, 4.)

Our translators have supplied two words at the close of the fourth verse, in order to complete the sentence which the apostle left unfinished; but it would have been better had they inserted them earlier, for the meaning is more clear if we read, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia, so I beseech thee now to remain there." It is an example of the way in which Paul's living thoughts leaped ahead of the words which might have clothed them.

I. The Period to which he refers in the phrase, "when I went into Macedonia," cannot be certainly fixed. There was indeed one occasion mentioned in Acts xx. 1, when, in consequence of the peril in which he was placed through the uproar raised by Demetrius, he did leave Ephesus for Macedonia; but in the chapter preceding that narrative we read that he had already sent Timothy and Erastus thither; and we know that he joined them there, because in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, written thence, he mentions Timothy as being then with him. It

seems indeed impossible to assign Timothy's special mission in Ephesus to any period covered by the Acts of the Apostles; and we are certainly warranted in believing that after Paul's first imprisonment (which probably ended in acquittal or in the dropping of the case by the prosecution) he spent several years in apostolic labour, revisiting among other churches those which he had planted at Crete and Ephesus, leaving Titus in the former and Timothy in the latter. It is hardly necessary to say that the subscription to this Epistle, "the first to Timothy was written from Laodicea," is unauthorised and obviously incorrect.

II. The Mode of Address to Timothy demands a word or two. "I besought thee"—not I commanded thee. No doubt this is expressive of the gentleness and affection with which Timothy was regarded, but it is also an indication of the kind of authority which was exercised by the apostles over their fellow-workers. There was nothing dictatorial about it, nothing of the military discipline which is so popular and effective in an aggressive section of the Church in our day. Influence then was that of character; authority was the outcome of inspiration; and even the chosen twelve were better pleased to rule by love than fear. It must be admitted that this may give rise to abuses and perils. If in a Church there arises a spirit of self-assertiveness; if some Diotrephes, loving to have the pre-eminence, resolves to oppose everything he is not permitted to lead; if there is such an absence of self-sacrifice that none but the pleasant work will be undertaken;—then the Church

will be discordant and its beauty and power will vanish. It is only "where the Spirit of the Lord is" that there can be the safe and the full enjoyment of liberty.

III. The Purport of Paul's entreaty was that Timothy should check the progress of false doctrine in the Ephesian Church. There was a ferment going on in the minds of men at that time, such as usually accompanies or follows a great religious movement. False notions of God, and of His law, arising from an imperfectly understood Judaism, combined with a speculative heathen philosophy, were threatening to destroy the simplicity of the Gospel. These became more clearly revealed as "heresies" in the next two centuries; but already their germs were at work, and Paul specially refers here to "fables and endless genealogies," to curious myths, and to those absurdly complicated calculations of the Rabbis about the position of letters in the sacred text, and the exact degree of value which might be attached to certain deeds or relations, good or evil. A sort of cabalistic system was being constituted in the Church, by an incongruous mixture of Jewish fancies with heathen speculations, and this threatened disaster—just as the ivy, climbing slowly but surely, thrusts in a root here and a tendril there, till the once strong wall has every stone loosened, and in the storm it falls.

IV. The Reason given for opposing such teaching is, that it "ministered questions rather than godly edifying." The Revised Version adopts another reading, and rightly so, for there is no doubt that the text was

corrupted, and the word *οἰκοδομιαν*—"edifying," was substituted by some copyist for *οἰκονομίαν*—"dispensation." The meaning is, that these questionings did not subserve God's "dispensation"—His specific plan for admission to His kingdom, His method of salvation unfolded in the Gospel; for that dispensation consists "in faith." And as a matter of experience we know that questions which merely excite the fancy, or even the intellect, tend to make the objects of faith distasteful. For example, a course of sensational novel reading, which peoples the mind with unrealities, does extrude earnest thoughts on spiritual realities. Or again, a man whose mind, whether as a worker in business or as a student in science, is perpetually occupied with things visible, may almost imperceptibly lose his faith in things invisible, the existence of which is not provable by the more sensuous processes with which he is familiar. Or, to turn to Church life. Those who lay stress on ceremonies—believing in baptismal regeneration, and in the real sacrifice of the altar—weaken the faith of themselves and of others in what is spiritual, so that the Gospel loses moral power most in countries where ceremonialism is rampant. And this which is true of the rites of the Church is equally true of its organisations, and we have constantly to be on our guard lest the occupation of the mind with the details of Church work should divert us from the cultivation of personal Christian life.

But the apostle here condemns chiefly the unhealthy practice of giving prominence to unimportant questions,

whether it be in the sphere of philosophy or of religion. Any subject which leads to vain conflict and barren controversy, and has no healthy bearing on our labours as God's servants, should not be allowed to usurp too much attention; for we may know all the subtleties of controversial theology, and may be familiar with the last theory of scientific research, and yet fail and come short of the glory of God. When a settler has to grow his own corn to provide himself with daily bread, he will let speculation on the strata beneath the surface wait till he has found time to sow and to reap.

V.

THE END OF THE COMMANDMENT.

(1 Tim. i. 5-7.)

These verses are occupied with a description of what God's dispensation was meant to produce, and indicate how it came to pass that many failed of it. "The commandment" or charge which Timothy had received had this as its end or purpose—the promotion of "love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." By love is meant the right relation of the whole nature both to God and to man; for love to man is in the highest sense a consequent of love to God.

I. Three conditions of this love are specified.

1. *A pure heart.*—This is essential to any vision of God. Unless we are purified our affections will naturally fasten upon selfish objects, or even upon those which are evil. It is possible, for example, to be so absorbed in one's family as to have no outgoing of sympathy to the needy outside it, and no uplifting of desire towards Him who deserves to be loved with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Or we may be so absorbed in ourselves as to resent all the claims for help and service which ought to be joyfully hailed. Nay, the heart may be so impure that love is none other than lust; and then that which

ought to be an angel's hand raising us to heaven, will become the devil's hand dragging us down to hell. "The pure in heart shall see God;" and of heaven we read, "Neither shall there enter into it anything that defileth nor worketh abomination." "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

2. *A good conscience* is often insisted upon in Scripture as one of the inestimable blessings enjoyed by God's children. Conscience is the activity of consciousness towards the ethical aspect of things. It is a faculty of the mind which reflects on actions as being morally evil or good. Conscience may be defiled till it is useless as a mud-stained mirror; it may be hardened, or, to use this apostle's phrase, "seared as with a hot iron," so as to be insensible as flesh would be after all the nerves in it had been destroyed—and that is the precursor of condemnation. But conscience is "good" if it is healed and purged by the Saviour's touch; if, instead of condemning us, it gives us confidence towards God; if it is reliable and unbiassed in its decisions on all questions brought before its tribunal; and if it not only directs the will, but spurs it into instant activity. Happy is he who can say,

> "I feel within me
> A peace above all earthly dignities—
> A still and quiet conscience." *

3. *Faith unfeigned* is the third condition of God-accepted love. Though mentioned last, "faith" is the germ grace—the seed principle. To us fallen men there is no way to a "good conscience" and a "pure heart"

* Shakespeare.

but that of "faith" in Jesus Christ—that faculty which, laying hold of Him the Mediator, brings us into fellowship with God and all unseen realities. But such faith is not a lazy assent to the doctrines of the Gospel, nor is it a formal profession of adherence to the cause of Jesus Christ; and to be of value in the sight of the Searcher of hearts it must be "faith unfeigned," the opposite of pretended belief and confidence not really felt. For there is a faith which is but a mask of unbelief, like the painted face on the Egyptian mummy-case—hiding coruption! May God save us from that and the condemnation which follows it.

The Apostle now turns from the conditions of love to—

II. Its Counterfeits, exhibited in those who, professing to aim at it, miss their mark and swerve aside to "vain janglings"—that is, to empty talking and disputation. Too often the Church has had members who have been destitute of moral and spiritual perceptivity, but have made themselves at home in speculations and controversies. And the worst tempers are to be found among the members of the more talkative and disputatious sects. Those who object to prayerfully toiling up the ladder of Christian virtues not infrequently come to grief by trusting to their pretentious wings. Paul heartily abhorred "vain babbling"—talk on religious subjects which was sometimes made a substitute for holy living; and in the Epistle to Titus, as well as here, some sharp stern words are uttered against it. He was probably not alluding to the Judaisers, who were wont to lay too much stress on the law, for he could not justly describe them thus, "understanding neither what they say nor whereof they

affirm." He evidently was thinking of others who made use of genealogies, and traditions, and fanciful allegorisings which did away with, or at least put out of sight, the moral element in the Gospel. St. John, writing about this same district at a later period, says, in allusion to those propagators of error—"no lie is of the truth;" and to show how the moral nature became deadened by such theories, he has to remind his readers of the very A B C of the Gospel, saying, "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." And similarly, our ascended Lord, looking upon the churches in the neighbourhood of Ephesus, says, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

False teaching is not to be lightly regarded or easily welcomed, as if it could have no evil effect on moral and spiritual life. For example, the philosophy of materialism, which represents our thoughts and affections as nothing but the emanations of movements in our physical bodies and brains, is ultimately destructive of moral responsibility and of belief in a coming immortality. "Continue thou in the things wherein thou hast been taught." Do not foolishly give up the faith which was associated with all that was sacred in your childhood. Remember that there is a sphere of existence outside the range of your senses, beyond the proof of your reason, of which you know nothing unless you accept the glimpses given of it in this Divine Revelation. Beware lest, like these Ephesian heretics, you swerve from the faith, having turned aside unto vain jangling.

VI.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW.

(1 Tim. i. 8–11.)

The value of God's gifts largely depends upon the use we make of them. There are powers within our reach which may with equal ease destroy our welfare or increase it. War, for example, perverts and distorts the skill, the strength, and the courage of men, so that they prove destructive of the results of industry and the sanctity of life. It is one of the tendencies of our fallen nature thus to misuse Divine gifts, and "the Gospel of the blessed God" seeks to extirpate it. Every reader of the Epistles, every student of Pharisaic teaching, and every one who understands the work of the Judaisers, is aware that even the Mosaic Law was grossly abused. Against that abuse our Lord and His disciples so steadfastly set themselves, that they were falsely charged with opposition and hostility to the law itself; and it was one of the main purposes of Paul's teaching to set that attitude of theirs in its proper light, and his Epistle to the Romans very distinctly and clearly does so. Jesus Christ Himself declared respecting the law—"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;" and by the example He set before the Church, by the love He

evoked, and by the spirit He gave, He made the law more noble and far-reaching than it ever had been before. But from its nature it was powerless to justify men, though it did much to instruct and restrain them. It could not cleanse the conscience, though it was a spur to it. It was like the pedagogue, or tutor, who in Roman society checked the wrongdoing of his patron's son, warned him against evil associations, guarded him from danger, and conducted him to the gymnasium, where education was given. "The law," says Paul, "was our pedagogue to lead us to Christ." The law is good if a man use it lawfully. The apostle next endeavoured to explain more fully the PURPOSE OF THE LAW, and his explanation may be summed up under three heads:—

I. THE LAW WAS NOT MEANT AS AN INSPIRATION.—"The law is not made for a righteous man." The statement is true, whether you think of a man "righteous" by nature or by grace. Those edicts and prohibitions were not intended for one who was eagerly inclined to obey their spirit. Such a revelation of God's will would not have been needed if Adam had continued in his righteousness, for things forbidden with pains and penalties after his fall were not at first attractive to him.

If you walk through a private garden with the children of its owner, as one of themselves, you do not see anywhere the unsightly notice-boards, which are necessary in a place open to the public, asking you to move in this direction or in that, and to avoid trespassing hither or thither. Amongst the children, and as one of them, you are consciously above the need of such laws as those. Restric-

tions and warnings are always meant for those inclined to break them. Another example might be drawn from society. The laws on our statute-books, the police who tramp through our streets, the vast organisation represented by prisons and courts, by judges and magistrates, would no longer be necessary, and would never have been called into existence, if every man loved his neighbour even as himself. It is those who are disobedient in nature who make law a necessary institution. Similarly in the home. When your first child comes as a gleam of sunshine into your home, you parents do not begin to make a theoretical code of restrictions; but when the children grow older, and there are conflicts of will between them, and the household is likely to be disorderly by their thoughtlessness and faults, you begin to say, "You must not do this or that; it is to be from this time forward forbidden." But as the years roll on and good habits are formed by the young people, and from the love they bear you they instinctively know what you wish and readily do it, even these wise rules practically fall into desuetude. Because they are ruled by a right spirit they are set free from law. Now this, in simple form, is what Paul meant by his frequent allusions to what the law was, and was not, intended to do. As God's free children "we are not under the law, but under grace." "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient."

This leads to our second assertion, namely, that the law which was not meant for an inspiration was—

II. Intended for the Restraint of the Disobedient.

—A lawless man is everywhere the least free. Carried hither and thither by his ungoverned passions; swayed now this way, now that, by his inexcusable carelessness and neglect, he nevertheless finds himself perpetually clashing against a will mightier than his own. Sometimes it is the law of his country which seizes him by the throat and holds him in restraint. Sometimes it is disease, the direct result of his own sin, which falls like a curse upon himself, and even upon his children. Sometimes it is conscience which protests and rebukes, until his whole life is made miserable. And these are but premonitions of what is coming when the Judge of all the earth will appear to give every man according to his works, and the thunders of outraged law will supersede the gentle voice of Christ's Gospel. Paul describes some of these guilty ones in the 9th and 10th verses. He speaks first generally of the "lawless and disobedient"—those self-willed spirits who spurn authority and control, whether it be of man or of God. In fact the two forms of disobedience are usually associated in one and the same person, and the defiance of authority in the home is too often the prelude to a life of practical godlessness. Depend upon it, he who refuses to recognise a higher will than his own in childhood is beginning the course which may end in the condemnation of the devil.

Roughly, yet forcibly, the apostle sums up manifestations of lawlessness under the first and second tables of the law. He speaks of "the ungodly and sinners" who openly set at defiance the chief law, which teaches us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and

strength: men who never have a sense of humbling awe in His presence and put no trembling trust in His mercy. "Unholy and profane," they are defiled in mind and contemptuous of spiritual things. To them nothing is pure and nothing sacred.

Terrible is the list of offences against human relationships which follows; though the first of the phrases in our version is at once too strong and too narrow. "*Murderers of fathers*" should be "smiters of fathers and smiters of mothers." The allusion may be to such crimes in the literal sense of the word, of which now and again we are horrified to hear, and which are commonest with those who are under the influence of drink—the cause of innumerable crimes! Or it may refer with equal force to those who smite their parents with the tongue, loading them with scorn and reproach, instead of encircling them with considerate love. "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother; and let all the people say Amen." "*Manslayers*"—those who, by their exactions and oppressions, indirectly destroy the lives of men—as well as murderers, who are regarded as the pariahs of society. "*Whoremongers and they that defile themselves with mankind*," are terms which are meant to include all transgressors of the seventh commandment, a law which our Lord Jesus so broadened out in its application that even indulgence in lustful thought and all pandering to evil passions in amusements, or in literature, come under the cognisance of that Divine law, and will receive condign and certain punishment hereafter, however much such sin succeeds here in disguising itself, and passing without

reproach from the world. "*Liars and perjured persons*" are forms of that false witness against one's neighbour which the ninth commandment so strongly condemns; and nothing is clearer as an evidence of the rule of Christ's spirit than the transparent truthfulness of character, which wins the admiration of the world, and suns itself in the favour of God.

This list is formidable enough, and the fact that the apostle does not confine himself to the phraseology of the Mosaic decalogue, is a sign that we do not evade the penalties of the law by keeping its letter. The law proclaims God's condemnation of all vice, whatever the forms it takes. And to make this still more evident, Paul adds that *if there be any other* sins he has overlooked (for he does not profess to mention them all), or if there be any vices too bad to mention, or any not existing in his day which might afterwards raise their serpent heads, the law of God proclaimed itself the foe of these also. It is, therefore, with a lowly acknowledgment of our own weakness, and a clear perception of the subtle ramifications of sin, that about these commands we pray, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these Thy laws in our hearts, we beseech Thee."

III. THE APOSTLE ASSERTS THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW IS AMONGST THE THINGS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD.—The "sound doctrine" he mentions is the teaching of our Lord and His apostles; which, as the phrase denotes, was thoroughly "sound" or wholesome, especially as opposed to the weak and distempered doctrines propounded by the false teachers

whom Timothy had to oppose. Men who laid great stress on abstinence from things proper enough in themselves were too often careless about the great moralities of life; and those who were busy with profitless speculations and controversies were by no means high types of Christian character. Moral perfection, the beauty of holiness, is set forth in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, the "sound doctrine" of which was utterly opposed to sickly sentimentalism, or to vain janglings of controversialists. And this was in accordance with *the glorious Gospel of the blessed God*, or rather with "the Gospel of the glory of God," whose glory—that is, whose moral perfections and character—are seen in all their lustre in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. That Gospel tells us how those condemned by the law may be justified, and it gives a motive force, even love to God, who is made known in Jesus Christ, which lifts us above the law, and creates a life of self-renouncing love which is a life of liberty.

How beautiful, and how full of suggestion, is the title (used in the Epistle to the Ephesians also) "*the blessed God*"—the God who is infinitely happy, and who would have all His creatures so. Philosophers dream and write about God as "the impassive and unthinkable essence;" as "the great unknown and unknowable;" as "the tendency outside ourselves which makes for righteousness." These ideas are but a revival of the teaching of those Eleatics and Epicureans whom Paul encountered confidently; for he believed as his Lord taught him to do, in a Heavenly Father, who was consciously "blessed" —happy in Himself and in His revelation of Himself to

us; and because He loved us, because He could not be happy without us, He gave His only begotten Son to redeem us, that, freed from the bondage of corruption and mortality, we might in eternal felicity live in His presence.

"Oh, for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Saviour's praises speak."

VII.

THE SUMMONS TO SERVICE.

(1 Tim. i. 12–14.)

The allusion to "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" is like the striking of a chord on the cathedral organ, which is accompanied by an outburst of praise. Paul was not troubled (as his critics are) about the interruption of his argument, but with all his heart he burst out in the midst of it with the words, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord!" His CALL TO SERVICE, to which he ever alluded so gratefully, requires our thoughtful consideration.

I. It was a Sign of Divine Grace. — The apostle might have given here a doctrinal exposition of the way in which transgressors of the law might be justified; but instead of this he adduces his own experience as an example of it. He, who had once sought the righteousness which was of the law, had seen a light above that of the noonday sun shining upon him, and in the glory of heaven had appeared Jesus of Nazareth, his Saviour and Lord. From that moment he understood that while the law was for condemning sinners, the Gospel was for saving them, ministering to every penitent the forgive-

ness of sins. And in God's abounding grace he found himself not only forgiven, but summoned to service; "made a chosen vessel" to bear God's treasure unto the Gentiles. He never ceased to be filled with wonder, that the Lord had "*counted him faithful,*" or esteemed him to be worthy of trust; and his highest ambition was to respond to this gracious confidence. For that is one of the best results of being trusted—it develops a sense of responsibility, and appeals to all that is noblest in the nature. Trust your child with some important message, or duty, and he will be more careful over it than over what is trivial. If you would have your servants loyal, regard them as faithful; do not suspect and watch them, as if they were dishonest. The mistress who keeps everything under lock and key, the employer who is always suspiciously dogging the footsteps of his young clerks, sometimes provoke the wrongdoing that they fear. God trusts us, and we should trust others; and though it may give us many a disappointment, it will justify itself in the long run. "Be ye, therefore, merciful, even as your Father who is in heaven is merciful."

The apostle was put in trust of the Gospel; in other words, he was commissioned to make known God's way of salvation through Christ, and upon him largely rested the responsibility of winning men to God, and then combining them in Christian communities. A higher work could not be sought for than this, and no ambition is more sacred and divine than that which prompts one to pray for it. Thank God for all the noble service which has been done in Christ's army by men, who, like our brave officers in lower warfare,

have dared and done valiantly for the truth. Paul does not here speak expressly of his official apostolate, but designedly uses a phrase which was applicable to all Christian work; to that of Timothy, and to that of the humblest teacher or worker the Church now possesses. He speaks expressly of "the ministry"—"the service," as the Revised Version has it—which might vary in form, but had as its essence the doing of something for Jesus Christ. And those who have any experience of this service feel that they need the superabounding grace of God to guide and sustain them in the work to which they have been divinely called. Throw yourself boldly and unreservedly into Christian service of any kind, and you will feel more than ever how much you need the wisdom and strength which are not of man, but of God. The oil from the olive tree must flow to the golden candlestick, or the light will die out. The well must be fed from heaven, indirectly through many a hidden channel, or it will soon be exhausted. And of Christ Jesus we may say, "All my springs are in Thee." In the law we find restraint, in the Christ we find inspiration. Many of us can thank God, as the apostle did, when he said, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant to me." It is He who "hath enabled me," who hath given me power, to receive the charge, and even in some slight measure to meet its awful claim.

II. But lest it should be thought that there was any natural innate worthiness of such a trust on Paul's part, he goes on to show that THIS SUMMONS TO SERVICE CAME TO ONE WHO WAS UTTERLY UNDESERVING.

1. It was like Paul, and therefore another indication of the authenticity of this Epistle, to call *prominent attention to what he had been before his conversion.* Like David he could say, "My sin is ever before me." His former career seemed to haunt him like a spectre; and though he knew it was all forgiven by the Lord, he found it almost impossible to forgive himself for those worse than wasted years. And if this were so with one who was divinely quickened on earth, how much more troubled they will be hereafter who will not only see the evil past, as they never saw it before, but who will not have, as he had, the consciousness that in God's great mercy it is forgiven.

The remembrance of past sin with Paul was not a source of sorrow only, but it was a source of thanksgiving. It was something like one of those wonderful clouds we see at sunset. At first it looms ominously on the horizon, as if the blackness of darkness were resting on the distant hill, but at last the sunlight streams forth, the edges of the cloud become dazzlingly bright, and soon the whole is suffused with purple, and crimson, and gold; the dark cloud is glorified, and we feel the evening would have lost half its beauty if the cloud had not been there.

Paul's description of his previous career is painted in colours black enough. "I was before," says he, "a blasphemer; cursing the sacred name of the Nazarene, and compelling others who loved Him, by my threats, to blaspheme Him too. I was a persecutor, standing by approvingly when others stoned Stephen, one of the

noblest of God's servants; and not sparing even weakly women who loved the Lord, who more than any other raised up and dignified womanhood; and I was injurious, a doer of outrage, shrinking from no act of violence and cruelty, if only I might crush the cause of the Nazarene. Yet God's mercy abounded even towards me. It was not like a river, but like a sea, deep, wide, and exhaustless. How then can I praise Him enough!" Let the thought of that infinite love lead you to repentance, lest you be found at last not only to have disobeyed Divine law, but to have rejected Divine mercy.

2. It was not with a desire to lessen the enormity of his guilt that he adds, "*I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*" None knew better than he did that his ignorance was culpable, because he had within his reach the means of conquering it; but he was anxious to show that he had never been like the worse section of the Pharisees, who knowingly rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and so had put themselves outside the pale of mercy.

Paul was a persecutor, not because he was indifferent to the claims of God, but because in his ignorance he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus. His position had been like that of the men concerning whom the Lord prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" or, like that of those to whom Peter said, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." None of us can judge of the limits of responsibility in the case of any man, nor can we tell how far ignorance is a weight to be thrown

into the scale of mercy; only the righteous Judge who knows everything, and overlooks nothing, can determine that; but the Judge of all the earth will do right; and the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, because He is the Son of Man. Yet Divine mercy is the necessity of every man, even of the unconsciously guilty; and this proud, ignorant Saul, before he was pardoned, needed to bow himself at Jesus' feet, and say with tears, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

III. Finally, it is evident that DIVINE GRACE WHICH GAVE THE CALL AND FORGAVE THE SINNER, HAD AS ITS SIGNS IN THE HEART OF THE CONVERT—"FAITH AND LOVE." "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus"—that is, they found their sphere of action in Christ. It was not merely that the former persecutor was led to see the transcendant excellence of Jesus, but such faith in Him, such love towards Him were aroused in his heart, that the persecutor became the apostle, who said, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."

Conclusion.—The Lord is calling us as He called Saul from the darkness of our ignorance into the light of His love; from the evils of the past to the bliss of pardon and sanctity; from the indolence which has reigned so long, to a life of self-renouncement for His dear sake.

VIII.

THE GOSPEL IN A SENTENCE.

(1 Tim. i. 15.)

It has been pointed out by critics that the expression "a faithful saying" does not occur in any other of the Pauline epistles except in those to Timothy and Titus. This, however, is no proof that these letters are not authentic, for they were written at a later period in the apostle's life. We know from experience how naturally we come to use certain phrases, which continually obtrude themselves in our conversation and letters for a time, and then they fall into desuetude, and in old age such repetition of familiar phrases is more frequent than before. Paul was not so subject to the inspiration of God's Spirit as to be exempt from the ordinary processes of brain activity, and we see no cause for surprise in the fact that a phrase he never used in his earlier ministry readily flowed from his pen in his later years, and that three times in his Epistles to Timothy, and once in his Epistle to Titus, he speaks of some "faithful saying."

Besides this, as years go on and new truths become familiar and are being conveyed by one to another, especially among those whose range of language is not great, as would be the case with Paul's hearers,

there is a tendency to the crystallisation of thought in familiar phrases. It is so with happy sayings struck out in political warfare, such as Lord John Russell's "rest and be thankful," or Disraeli's allusion to "extinct volcanoes," or Bright's reference to the "cave of Adullam," or John Morley's "end them or mend them;" and the same sort of process is seen in scientific phraseology, "the survival of the fittest," "natural selection," and so forth. By choice sentences like these thought held in solution is crystallised, and is more rapidly conveyed from one person to another; or, to use another figure, the gold of thought long in a state of fusion is finally stamped by a master mind, and then passes from hand to hand as the current coin of God's kingdom. This was the process which soon asserted itself in the early Churches, and was the more natural and necessary, because the diffusion of truth was oral rather than written. Short sentences, struck off in an inspired moment, were laid hold upon by retentive memories, and repeated by one Christian to his neighbour, and thus the truth was not only preserved but was propagated.

The earliest example we have of this is alluded to by Paul in his address to the elders of this Ephesian Church, when referring to a phrase which is now recorded in our Gospels, but was evidently familiar to his hearers, he said, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Another specimen of these current sayings is given in the second chapter of the Second Epistle to Timothy, where we read—"It is a faithful saying, For if we be

dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." Every one can see how such familiar sayings would instruct the unbeliever and encourage the believer.

With all the advantages which arise from the possession of a Christian literature, we cannot afford to be without such faithful sayings; indeed, the diffuseness and vagueness of modern Christian thought is in part due to contentment with general information rather than with definite and concentrated truth. Texts of Scripture familiar to the memory, and dear to the heart, may often come in for our guidance and comfort in time of necessity; but too often Christian in the Valley of Humiliation finds that the sword of the Spirit is out of his hand in the very crisis of his conflict. And hymns, in their measure, have a similar value to that of verses of Scripture. They are for the most part the utterances of our best men at their best times—when they have risen triumphant over their doubts, and above the cramping effect of denominational barriers, and may bring help and inspiration to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let us not be unmindful of the spiritual help to be found in the faithful sayings of the Church.

One of the noblest and earliest of these is before us in a verse which contains and conveys the Gospel in a sentence—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

I. The Mission of the Son of God is here set forth—He "came into the world." This expression would be an extravagance if it referred only to ordinary human parentage. But read in connection with other inspired utterances it implies, if it does not expressly assert, the conscious pre-existence of our Lord. Similarly, we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "When He bringeth in the first begotten into the world He said, And let all the angels of God worship Him;" and, in the Gospel according to John, our Lord Himself declares, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world;" again, "I leave the world, and go to the Father;" and once more, "I am come that they might have life." The pre-existence of our Lord in a higher state was unquestionably an accepted axiom among the early Christians, a commonplace of primitive Christian belief; and we, believing in His deity, offer Him our lowly adoration as well as our thanks and love.

II. The Purpose of His Mission could not be set forth more clearly and concisely than in the words, He came "to save sinners." His object was not to become the temporal king of the Jewish people, nor yet to give the light of scientific, or philosophical, or even ethical knowledge to the Gentiles; but to redeem men from the condemnation of the law, and to deliver them from their sins. To reverence Him as a kingly man, or to honour Him as a great Teacher only, is but an imperfect acknowledgment of His claims. He demands the giving up of sin, the recognition and acceptance of His atonement, and the absolute submission of the whole life to His will. His cleansing of defiled lepers, His delivery of the dead from

the grave and its corruption, and His casting out of evil spirits, were miracles which set forth what He came to do in the spiritual experience of His followers. The woman who washed His feet with penitential tears, the publican, who at His coming welcomed salvation to his house, and vowed to set right, as far as he could, the result of past exactions and unrighteousnesses, showed what He expected of those who would be His followers. He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, and therefore the message came by an angel to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

III. The Exemplification of this purpose, given by Paul, is drawn from his own experience. He says, respecting himself, of sinners, "I am chief." The word "sinners" is the same as occurs in the ninth verse, where it denotes those for whom the law was a necessity, for rebuke and restraint. Whom the law came to condemn, Jesus came to save. And in Galatians ii. 15 the same word is applied to the Gentiles who were outside the covenant of promise, living without God and without hope in the world. It seems strange that Paul, who even at his worst had been an ascetic and punctilious Pharisee, should speak of himself as "chief" amongst sinners. But if we had as deep an insight into our own case as he had—if we recognised as clearly as he did the far-reaching effects of sin, especially of such sin as his, sin which misleads, perverts, and ruins others—we might think thus of ourselves. When, under the influence of chloroform, some critical operation is performed, and the patient wakes up to find that it is over, a great

feeling of thankfulness rises up in his breast at the whisper, "thank God it has been successful," for he knows that life is saved; but he would feel still more thankful if he knew what the skilful surgeon does, that there was only a fractional part of an inch in this direction or in that between him and death. Paul knew better than we do what he had been saved from here and hereafter, and his intensity of feeling about sin was an element in his spiritual greatness. May God give us also humbling views of ourselves and adoring thoughts of Him who has saved us!

Conclusion.—The truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, is "worthy of all acceptation." "It is a faithful saying," worthy of implicit credence, of absolute reliance, for it will not give way though you lean the whole weight of your soul's salvation on it. It is worthy of acceptance *by all men*—by despairing sinners clutching at the straws of their own resolves, regardless of the outstretched hand of the one Saviour; and by self-sufficient moralists who shut their eyes to their need and danger, knowing nothing of the awful depths beneath them. And it is worthy of *every kind of acceptation;* worthy of being embraced by every faculty of mind, and heart, and will. You may understand it as a theological doctrine, but that is not enough; you may love it as a familiar pleasant-sounding phrase, but that is not enough. It deserves the homage of your entire nature. As the disciples cast garments and palm branches in the way of the coming Saviour, so let us prostrate our thoughts, our affections, our wills, and our lives before Him who in infinite love "came into the world to save sinners."

IX.

PRAISE FOR SALVATION.

(1 Tim. i. 16, 17.—"I obtained mercy.")

The narration of personal experience may be very helpful to those who are wanting instruction or sympathy. Men are better able to grasp truth in the concrete than in the abstract. To see a sinner saved from sin is more helpful than to read of salvation. No one recognised this more clearly, or acted on it more wisely, than Paul; and some of the most instructive parts of his Epistles are those in which he recounts his own religious experience. We may similarly help others, especially our own children, and those who are within the sacred circle of friendship; but the narration of experience may be as harmful as beneficial, if it becomes frequent or formal. There is danger of egotism, till our own personality covers the whole horizon of our thought. There is risk of affected singularity, as if we wished to be distinguished from others and considered superior to them. A fatal tendency to exaggerate our feelings by the use of phrases too large for our actual experience may assert itself. And especially with young Christians the spiritual life may be seriously injured by public display—as a seed germinat-

ing in darkness will be killed by exposure to air and light. There are those to whom Jesus says, "Go ye and teach all nations;" but there are others to whom He says, "Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done for thee." What is helpful at a time of religious revival may be harmful as a regular and formal branch of Church work; and in nothing is heavenly wisdom more needed than in the right use of personal religious experience. Paul had this wisdom in abounding measure. Referring to himself he says—

I. THAT SALVATION CAME TO ONE MOST UNDESERVING.—"Chief of sinners though I am," he exclaims, "I obtained mercy," "that in me," in the very depths of my nature, in my whole future destiny, Jesus Christ might "show forth all long-suffering." Paul wondered that he had not been struck down dead when he blasphemed the name of Jesus in the synagogue, or when he watched with eager exultation the stoning of the martyr Stephen; and when the light came from heaven which smote him to the earth, leaving him blind and helpless, he marvelled that it was not death, but life which, in His infinite mercy, the Lord Jesus brought to him. And this salvation was not for himself alone; nor was it merely that by his preaching he might advance the cause he had hated; but he was conscious—

II. THAT HIS CONVERSION WAS A PATTERN FOR ALL THE FUTURE.—One reason God had for making this bold sinner a vessel of Divine grace, was that he might be a living exemplification of mercy, so that in all the future the most guilty might say, "If God saved Saul,

He can save me." He was not only to be a herald, and a preacher of glad tidings, but was to exemplify them in his own life and character; and ever since that time the conversion of Paul has been, as much as his teaching, an inspiration to the Church. Remembering what he was, and what he became, we may be encouraged to bow at Jesus' feet and say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and still the message comes for every weary heart, "If thou believest as Paul, thou shalt be saved as Paul."

III. THAT SUCH CONVERSION SHOULD EXPRESS ITSELF IN PRAISE TO GOD is evident from the noble doxology which follows—"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, incorruptible, invisible, the only (wise) God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Paul was always ready for a song of praise, and could sing as heartily in prison at Philippi as at the prayer-meeting beside its river. The thought he had just uttered concerning God as the sovereign dispenser of grace, who had foreseen from the first what the persecutor would be, and who would still show in all the world's future His merciful kindness to those who believed in Jesus, naturally evoked this sublime expression of adoring grateful worship. There is no exact parallel to this doxology in the New Testament. It is not often that God is spoken of as "King," and the expression rendered by our translators "the King eternal," but more correctly in the margin of the Revised Version "King of the Ages," is quite peculiar to this verse. What a helpful assurance this is that our God, our Saviour, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the

supreme Lord of all the successive ages which stretch from the forgotten past into the Infinite future; that He controls all stages of development in the natural realm, in the creation and dissolution of worlds, and in the kingdom of grace! The insects whose world is crushed by a footstep may as well expect to comprehend the works and plans of man, as we profess to understand the infinite purposes of the King of the Ages—the incorruptible, the invisible, and the only God. To Him be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

X.

TIMOTHY'S CHARGE AND WARNING.

(1 Tim. i. 18-20.)

The "charge" to which Paul alludes does not refer to what he said in the third and fifth verses, but points on to what follows—to that good warfare which Timothy was summoned to undertake against evil. From his own experience and office, the apostle turns to encourage his young fellow-labourer; for the true Christian thinks more of others than of himself, and uses his own attainments to enrich them and not to glorify himself. The desert sand drinks in the rain and the rock rejects it; but the fertile soil holds it, not for itself but for the life and well-being of what is dependent upon it; and this should be a type of those who receive spiritual benediction.

I. The Charge, of which Timothy was reminded,

1. *Had been indicated by inspired prophets* in the Church. In those days God gave some to be "prophets" as well as some to be "apostles" and "teachers." There were prophets at Antioch who announced the way in which missionary enterprise should be undertaken, men through whom the Lord said, "Separate me Barnabas

and Saul." Agabus had a similar gift, as had also the daughters of Philip, the evangelist. These prophets were able to take (not always, but often) far-seeing glances into the future; although, judging from the little information we have upon the subject, they appear to have foreseen what would happen to individual Christians rather than to the Church or to the world in general. This verse intimates that at a certain period in Timothy's history—probably when he was specially set apart for Christian work—such prophecies had been uttered over him, and as he was but a lad, and by no means physically robust, we can understand that these inspired utterances would be necessary to bring about his election, to which the worldly wise might object. Very significantly Paul says these prophecies "went before on thee;" that is, they were not only uttered upon, or over him, but they went forth "before" him in his future course, revealing it and inspiring him to follow it—just as the consciousness of having a courier in front would direct and encourage the traveller. Hence Paul adds that "by them," or in them, Timothy might wage a "good warfare;" he was to feel like one clothed and armed in those prophetic hopes, in those believing prayers.

And do not we know something of this? No man has ever done great work in the world unless he has a deep moral conviction that he is predestined to do it; and this was never exemplified better than in General Gordon, who, in more than one campaign, felt that he was invincible and resistless till his work was done. And in our lowlier spheres we should be the more watchful, earnest,

and hopeful, because others have had great hopes about us, and because we have been set apart to be God's servants by many an act of dedication. It is a great thing to have prophecies going before us, and the prayers of dear ones encircling us so that in them we may war a good warfare.

2. *For this charge involved conflict.*—The hopes and prayers of others could not save Timothy from spiritual dangers, nor avert from him spiritual foes, nor relieve him from personal responsibilities. And here it is worthy of notice, that in his Epistles this apostle nearly always draws his illustrations of a Christian's duties from military and not from sacerdotal life. The responsibilities of the Roman soldier and not of the Levitical priest seemed to him the more fitting emblems of the work we have to do. Knowing what he did of the powers of evil in the world, and of the strength of sin in the heart, we do not wonder that he urges us to take to ourselves the whole armour of God.

3. *And for success in this warfare "faith and a good conscience" are essential.*—"Faith" fitly goes first, because without it we have no hold on the invisible God—the source of strength and the giver of victory; but a "good conscience" must evermore accompany it, because the struggle is a moral one, in which we want not only an enlightened mind and a determined will, but also that sensitiveness to good and evil which will tell us when to be on our guard and when to advance with courage. "Faith," without a "good conscience," is like a garrison summoned to defend one gate of the fortress, while a

traitor is opening the other gate to relentless foes. This leads the apostle to give Timothy—

II. THE WARNING which is contained in the last two verses.

1. *He speaks of some who had put away a good conscience*, stifling its voice and thrusting it from them, with this result, that they had made shipwreck of faith. And this experience has often repeated itself in the history of the Church. Balaam put away a "good conscience" when he paltered with his convictions to his soul's undoing. Saul, the king, did so when he disobeyed the distinct command of God, until he was no longer able to hear the Divine voice and resorted to the witch of Endor. Judas Iscariot did so when he resisted the promptings of the Holy Spirit and betrayed his Lord and Master; and in each case the sacrifice of conscience brought about "the shipwreck of faith." Like the bleached timbers on a rocky coast—those fearsome histories appear for our warning, lest our end should be as theirs. When our religious faith fails to influence our practice, and becomes only a subject for the play of fancy and speculation; when our views of truth and duty become dim or wavering, and we are content that it should be so, we are in danger—the anchorless vessel is drifting in upon the rocks of infidelity and despair. The loss of spiritual life follows on the sacrifice of moral purity. May God keep us undefiled, that we may never make shipwreck of faith!

2. *Examples of this are pointed out to Timothy:* "Hymenæus and Alexander."—The latter was a very

common name, so that we cannot confidently identify this man with "Alexander, the coppersmith," who, Paul declares, in the Second Epistle, did him much evil; but Hymenæus was so uncommon a name that we may be sure it was he of whom the apostle says, in the Second Epistle, that he and Philetus were in grievous error, denying the doctrine of the resurrection, and declaring that it was past already. A blunted conscience evidently accompanied a darkened mind. A moral fall was involved in an heretical lapse; for the mutual dependence of these is far more close than many think.

3. *Paul did what he could to save and warn them,* saying of them, "Whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." A difficult passage, chiefly because we know so little of apostolic modes of Church discipline. This chastisement probably involved a formal removal from the Church of Christ, with all the shame and mortification which accompanied it; for, as we see in the case of Corinth, the whole Church confirmed the decision of the apostle. But this peculiar phraseology, "whom I have delivered unto Satan," implies more than that. It certainly did not mean that they were given over to perdition, for the object of the punishment was their salvation, "that they might learn not to blaspheme," that is, not to misrepresent and calumniate the truth of God.

Here, as well as elsewhere, Satan is spoken of not as an independent hostile power, but as one who is allowed to work evil for a given purpose, which is often beyond the range of men to discover. Thus Job was left in the

power of the adversary for a season; and similarly, the Lord Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Paul himself speaks of the "thorn in the flesh" as being "the messenger of Satan to buffet" him. And when in the light of these passages we read this solemn declaration and couple it with 1 Cor. v. 5, where Paul says of the incestuous offender, "With the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the days of the Lord Jesus," we come to the conclusion that the apostles were gifted with, and sometimes used, the solemn power of inflicting disease on the body in order to awaken in the offender, or in others, convictions of sin and longings for salvation. In the terrible cases of Ananias and Elymas, we see evidences of a power to punish given to those who could heal diseases and cast out devils, a power which no doubt was demanded by the exigencies of the Church, and certainly died with the apostles, who could not transmit it.

But underlying its exercise was a principle of Divine discipline, which is applicable in every age; for there is no loss we sustain, no affliction we suffer, but may work for our spiritual welfare, warning us against evil, and stimulating us to holier endeavour and more earnest prayer.

"Let us be patient, these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise."

SERMONETTES ON SECOND CHAPTER.

I.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

(1 Tim. ii. 1–4.)

Prayer is a first necessity of the Christian life. From the moment when the soul turns in penitence to God, and angels say, "Behold he prayeth," until the hour when, at the gates of Paradise, the dying saint exclaims, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," communion with God is the vital breath of His child. In proportion to the keenness of our spiritual perception, and the exercise of our religious energies, is the consciousness of our need for prayer. Without it we are like soldiers in the arid desert, who grow more and more weary as they think of distant wells separated from them by relentless foes, and we are ready to exclaim, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Any doubts, any companionship, any pleasures which either deaden our sense of the necessity of prayer, or prevent our enjoyment of its blessedness, are to be regarded and dealt with as our deadly foes.

When we pray we become conscious of the reality of unseen things until they completely outweigh in importance

worldly affairs, and then it becomes possible to us, and even natural to us, to live as "strangers and pilgrims." In prayer we are also made more sensible of the presence and of the infinite love of our Heavenly Father, and become convinced that what He has ordained must be wise and good, and thus in tribulation our troubled hearts are quieted. And when we speak to Him we are more ready to recognise how much there is which lies, and must lie, beyond our finite comprehension, and we learn to leave contentedly some mysteries unexplained, feeling that God would not be infinite if we were able to comprehend Him. These and many other blessings are ours through the exercise of prayer.

But Scripture constantly affirms that there is more than subjective good to be gained through fellowship with God; that if we ask we receive, and this not only for ourselves but for others. The world is blessed by the prayers of the saints. They constitute the ladder of light on which the angels of God ascend and descend. Hence Paul exhorts that prayers should be made for all men.

The connection with what precedes is tolerably clear. Timothy had been exhorted to wage a good warfare on behalf of the truth, but prayer for himself and others was essential to victory, because it alone would bring into the field of conflict the unseen powers of heaven. Even the Pagan Greeks were said to be inspired in their fight against the Trojans by the thought that the gods were with them; but theirs was only dim and superstitious remembrance of the truth that Heaven fights for those who pray—

as Elisha found when the Syrians encircled the city. Prayer offered by the Church in Ephesus, in Rome, in Jerusalem, received answers in the spiritual victories of believers, and in the effects produced through their witness-bearing upon the hearts of the people. And this exhortation, that in the Christian assemblies prayers should be offered "for all men," has come running down the groove of the centuries to our own time, in order that we also may pay good heed to it.

I. THE VARIETY OF PRAYER is indicated by the use of these differing phrases, "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. No doubt these terms overlap each other, and are not intended to be too rigidly defined. But it is clear that the apostle refers (1) to those simple expressions of want which begin with a cry for pardon; (2) to that communion with God which involves an habitual listening for His voice, and a natural talking with Him about everything; and (3) to those importunate intercessions for others which are most of all accordant with the spirit of the Great Mediator. While (4) "thanksgiving" should be so cultivated that even Christians living in a heathen city, with difficulties and dangers around them which we little comprehend, would nevertheless find it natural.

We may think of these phrases separately in order to get a clearer notion of the meaning of each; but one shades off into another; and you can no more exactly define each than you can say of the colours of a sea at sunset, "the blue begins just here, and the glow of crimson and the sheen of the gold just there."

The more you pray the more you will discover the variety of soul-utterances to God; the calm contemplation; the agonising supplication; the childlike talk with the Heavenly Father; and the seraphic praisefulness. These are only known through experience. When the untaught, unmusical lad takes up a violin, it is as much as he can do to produce one steady tone, but in the trained hands of the accomplished musician that same instrument wails, and pleads, and sings. Much more varied are the utterances of the human soul, when a full answer is given to the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray."

II. THE SUBJECTS OF PRAYER specially referred to in this passage are not the necessities of the saints themselves, but the wants of other men, and especially of all those who had authority and who exercised influence over society.

The wide and generous sympathies inculcated by early Christian teachers must have appeared very startling, both to the Jewish people and to the Gentile world. The apostles, taught by their Divine Master, held that God had "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," and that these were mutually dependent and could unitedly bring about the true welfare of the whole race. As the body had its many members which were animated by one life, each limb and organ having its own function, yet all together ministering to the good of the one man; so was it, in their eyes, with society at large, as well as with the Church of God.

The lesson has not been properly learnt yet. If it had been, wars and rumours of wars would have ceased long ago; society would have been so consciously stable that commerce would not have been afraid to venture into new enterprises; untold numbers of brave lives would have been spared, and millions of troubled hearts would have been delivered from their agony of dread or of grief. We Christians ought to pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority," not only in this country but in other lands, that evil ambitions may be crushed out of their hearts; that designs prompted by greed, or by ambition, or by revenge, may be thwarted; and that the good of the peoples at large, rather than of a few sections of society, may be promoted by the universal prevalence of peace, righteousness, and love.

The word "kings" in this verse is used quite generally, just as it was by our Lord when He said to His disciples, "Ye shall be brought before governors, and kings, for My sake and the Gospel's." The "kings" were heathen, and yet were to be included in the Church's prayers, with a charity that hoped all things, and with a faith that believed the assurance, "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." In this respect the conduct of Christians was a contrast to that of the Jews, for it was in apostolic days that the Jews refused to offer sacrifices and prayers for foreigners. Listen to what Tertullian says in his Apology respecting the practice of these early Christians. "We Christians, looking up to heaven with outspread hands, because they are

free from stain; with uncovered heads, because there is nothing to make us blush; without a prompter, because we pray from our hearts; do intercede for all emperors, that their lives may be prolonged, their government be secured to them, that their families may be preserved in safety, their senates faithful to them, their armies brave, the people honest, and the whole empire at peace, and for whatever other things are desired by the people or the Cæsar." If that was the custom under heathen rule, how much more is it our duty under a Christian government! Therefore let us pray that our national affairs may be guided with wisdom; that amidst the tortuous channels of foreign policy, where so many cross currents and hidden rocks abound, the ship of state may be firmly and safely steered; that questions likely to provoke anger and suspicion may be settled on fair principles of justice; and that in all home legislation inequalities and injustices of every kind may be swept away, the needs of a chronic pauperism met, temptations to drunkenness and profligacy lessened where they cannot be removed; and thus "God, even our own God, will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."

We may fairly widen the application of these words still further. Some of our truest "kings" are uncrowned. A man who directs and rules the thought of a nation has more power than one who gives expression to it; and we have seen instances in which a man has lost far more than he has gained by exchanging the position of an editor for that of a legislator. Writers for the press,

teachers in schools and universities, leaders in society, organisers and chiefs of political parties, secretaries of workmen's organisations, scientific explorers and expounders; these are among the "kings" of the earth for whom we pray that they may bring all their riches and power into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Issue of such Prayers is thus described—"That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty," or rather "in all godliness and *gravity*," as those who are not perturbed by earthly strifes, but see in the state of society around them the germs of the righteousness and peace which are of heaven.

IV. The Acceptability of such Prayers in the sight of God is expressly asserted. This custom of prayer (not this state of society) is "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." In other words, if His love embraces all, our prayers should include all; for it is through His Church that His purposes are accomplished, and through its neglect men may be lost whom He is longing to save.

This verse has sometimes been pressed into the service of universalism, and Calvin, therefore, sought to limit the meaning of the phrase "all men," to all sorts of men; that God willed to save kings as well as peasants, Gentiles as well as Jews. But there is no need for that unjustifiable limitation. The last clause in the verse, which speaks of coming to a full knowledge of the truth as being God's will concerning us, is sufficient to indicate the

essential condition of being saved, and for their acceptance of this men are themselves responsible. But we Christians are to exhibit the truth, to strive to win men's affections to it, to pray earnestly that they may submit themselves to it, in order that God's message of good-will may have practical effect upon all, in the devout belief that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn from their wickedness and live. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

II.

THE ATONEMENT.

(1 Tim. ii. 5–7.)

Paul gives this as his reason for believing that God "willeth all men to be saved," and that His people should pray for their salvation—that we are all related to one God and to the one Mediator. God is "one God," not two or more gods, as the neighbours of Timothy in Ephesus believed. There is not one God for the Gentiles and another for the Jews; one God for Englishmen and another for Arabs and Russians; one God for the rich and another for the poor; one God who works evil and another who does good; but before the same Eternal King we all stand on equal footing, and to Him we may all turn with the same confidence.

I. The Necessity for a Mediator is, however, distinctly implied. "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man—Himself man, Christ Jesus." The true humanity of our Lord we thankfully recognise. In Him God has come near to us, and revealed Himself to us, therefore Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." And again, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Christ is a true Mediator, because He blends two natures

in His own, the Divine and the human. When a man is down in a horrible pit, a rope dangling above him would be a mockery if it were far out of his reach; and a ladder set in the miry clay beside him would be equally useless, if the ground above were at an unreachable distance from its highest rung. The only means of communication, which can bring him salvation, must reach the sunlit plain above him, and yet be within his grasp. So is it with the "one Mediator." As the God-man He reigns in the highest, yet reaches the lowest, and as the Son of *man* rather than the Son of David or the Son of Abraham, He touches every man, whatever his race or condition.

II. The Essence of the Atonement appears in the statement that He, the Mediator, Christ Jesus, "gave Himself a ransom for all."

The Bible, which is the only explicit declaration we have about God's dealing with sin, constantly asserts, not in isolated texts, but in its whole tenor, that men were out of harmony with God, and that but for the interposition of Jesus Christ they would have perished in their sins. But in His infinite love the Eternal Word became man, and in His Divine-human life He accepted for Himself the conditions which had bound sin and death together, and broke the spell of sin and exhausted the curse of death. The idea of substitution, however little it commends itself to the judgment of some who have often very imperfectly considered it, is unquestionably involved in this. The Greek word translated here "ransom," means the redemption price paid for the deliverance of a slave or

captive, and when Jesus "gave *Himself*" (not money or power) a ransom for all, He was like one who takes the place of a prisoner that the prisoner may go free. If the captive refuses freedom he perishes, but the love of his would-be deliverer is none the less. Man's escape from the dominion of sin and death is not possible through evolution or development, but through Divine interposition, which is revealed in the Christ, "who gave Himself a ransom for all."

Most of those who have rejected this great doctrine have done so because they have had pressed home upon them only one phase of it—as if that were in itself a complete and satisfactory account of a profound mystery. The Atonement has sometimes been spoken of as a sort of legal transaction, having no essential bearing upon moral character, which will procure acquittal for the sinner at the bar of judgment without setting him free from the usurpation of sin. Hence thoughtful men have said—"I cannot receive that doctrine; I should not be content to be exempted from punishment which I deserved on the ground that it was transferred to some one else who did not deserve it. It would neither be just nor generous." And the reply is conclusive and deserved, as condemning the partial view of the Atonement as if it were the whole. But the cross of Jesus Christ tells us far more. It declares that God so loves us that He cannot rest till He delivers us from sin; that He would make any sacrifice for such an end, and that by the exhibition of His love and the transforming power of His Spirit, he would conform us to the likeness of His Son, that we may be

partakers of His death and of His life, becoming dead to sin and alive to righteousness.

1. *The Godward side of the Atonement* is as important as it is mysterious, but it is not to be insisted upon as if it were all. The Scripture asserts again and again in types and in texts that it is in virtue of the death of Christ that God can justly forgive; that except for His sacrifice the Divine love could not reach us; that by Him satisfaction was made to the law of God, and that pardon was not, and could not be, a bare act of grace. All who accept that assurance and turn in penitence and confidence to God, are at once fully and freely forgiven.

These statements are beyond proof. They concern a sphere of existence about which we know absolutely nothing except what is revealed in Scripture. They have to do with the relations between the Eternal Father and the Only Begotten Son, about which the wisest of us are profoundly ignorant. We do not understand how the law of the Father required the sacrifice of the Son, nor how the death of the God-man affected the purpose of the Father; but are we to say, therefore, that there is no connection between them? Is that the only mystery in life? Why, what do you know of your own existence in its deeper relations? You cannot understand how two natures can inhere in one and the same person—the one being affected by the other in subtle and yet intimate ways; yet you believe that you yourself have those two natures—the physical, which will soon be left in the grave; the psychical, which is so dependent on it, yet so independent of it. If you do not understand the relation

between your own double personality ; if you do not know how the brain affects thought, how thought uses the brain, how can you hope to bring within the compass of your definitions the relations between the Father and the Son ; between the death on the cross which was visible and the effect of it on Divine righteousness, which is invisible. A God I could comprehend would be no God to me.

Yet it has been a frequent and grievous mistake of popular theology to dwell upon this aspect of the Atonement only as if it contained the whole truth. But we must also remember that Christ's giving of Himself as a ransom for all was meant to have its influence on human hearts. This leads us to contemplate—

2. *The man-ward side of the Atonement.* Before the advent of our Lord, men had come to doubt and even to deny that God loved them. They regarded Him as a hard and austere Being, who required to be placated by gifts and sacrifices. It did not occur to them as possible that God would Himself make the atonement ; that He had never ceased to love them, and was ready to bear and do anything which might redeem them from sin and restore them to Himself. But "He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." He commendeth His love to us in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly."

The Cross of Calvary assured the world that the Divine love, even for sinners, was capable of the utmost self-sacrifice, which taught many to say, "We love Him because He first loved us."

But there is yet another phase of Christ's atoning work which must not be lost sight of. We have seen that it vindicated Divine law, and revealed Divine love so as to touch the hearts of those who saw it, but it was meant also to exert an ethical influence over men.

3. *The moral power of the Atonement.* Many sneer at professing Christians as men who persuade themselves that they are relieved from the punishment of sin, but who show no signs whatever of being redeemed from its power. They jeer at those also who talk with effusive sentiment of the love of God, but who fail to display a righteous and manly character. But love such as God calls for, and the sacrifice of Calvary demands, is really a strong and active affection; indeed, we are told that "love is the fulfilling of the law." It draws us from sin to righteousness, breaks the power of evil, heals our wounds, and washes away our stains; and, through "the blood of the Lamb," we are able to walk as those clothed in white robes. Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, in order that we might be dead to sin and alive unto righteousness. "He gave Himself a ransom for all."

I have thus indicated the three directions in which your thoughts should run if you wish to understand the Scripture doctrine of the Atonement. It is at once a propitiation for sin, a claim on our love, and the mightiest moral force the world has known; but we do not comprehend it by all our searching. Our knowledge is only like that of one who has explored a tiny island which is surrounded by an infinite sea of mystery, and, when we

reach the limits of our furthest shore, we can only adoringly say, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Our one comfort is that, in every time of darkness and storm, we, like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, can see the Lord Jesus walking on the waves of mystery; and we can even walk a little way with Him so long as by faith we hold His mighty, loving hand.

III. THE PROPAGATION OF THIS FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH through the world is to depend upon human testimony. Paul says that he himself was a living witness of it, for none who knew what he had been and had now become could doubt that God was willing that all men should be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. And he had been also appointed as a "preacher and apostle" of these glad tidings to the Gentiles, in order that by proclaiming the "truth" he might help them to "faith" in God.

This, brethren, is our duty too. It may be that we have not any remarkable gifts like Paul's, but we may reveal to others the power of Christ to save from sin, if only we ourselves experience that power. A holy life is more mighty than the most eloquent sermon, and through it each one of us, however lowly in position, may make a good confession, and testify to God's saving power "in due time," in its own time—while mercy is within reach of all.

But since we are only strong when we wait upon God,

and can only witness for Him when, like Moses, we come forth from His immediate presence, let us carry in our hearts this exhortation of Paul's—"I will, therefore, that men *pray* everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

III.

ON PRAYER.

(1 Tim. ii. 8.)

In this verse the apostle recurs to the subject of prayer, upon which he had spoken at the beginning of the chapter. Prayer is such an essential habit in any real Christian life, and is so necessary to the spiritual progress of the Church, that it could not be too often referred to, the more so as God is ever listening for it. A dumb child in the family must be a continual grief to his father, and a child who is silent from indifference or from aversion would rend his heart still more; yet we, knowing this, are slow to believe that God is grieved and angry over the prayerless. The Revised Version renders the Greek more correctly by the phrase, "I *desire* therefore" that men pray everywhere, for no "will" or resolve of Paul's could make men pray. He could counsel, but he could not command this expression of longing towards God, and still less can any minister or parent give the spirit of prayer. We can determine the times to be set apart for such worship, and we may provide forms of prayer to be employed by those who choose to use them, but praying is no more to be commanded than loving.

The child may learn the simple phrases which have been used for generations by little ones when they have gone to the throne of grace, but the mother who yearns over the child as he kneels can do no more than say, "I *desire* you to pray;" and must leave it to the Great Inspirer of all holy desire to give speech to the dumb soul, longing to the unawakened heart, and so to answer the petition, "Lord, teach us to pray."

I. The Universality of Prayer was a Divinely-given conception of the apostle's. Not only did he desire prayer to be offered for all men by Christians, as he says in the first verse, but that "all men, everywhere," should pray —till heaven be linked with this world by bonds as numberless as the rays of sunlight, which make a golden ladder between the earth and the sun. No doubt the primary reference is to the Christian assemblies, from which intercessions were continually to arise; but more is implied than this—namely, that all places are sacred, that from cathedrals and from hovels, from happy gatherings in our homes, and from secret places of wrestling and agony, from quiet rooms where the sick are wasting, and from noisy haunts of bustling activity, praises and prayers should rise toward God.

> "From every place below the skies,
> The grateful song, the fervent prayer,
> The incense of the heart, may rise
> To heaven and find acceptance there."

"I will, therefore, that men pray *everywhere*."

II. The Spirit of Prayer is indicated very clearly in the words which follow. Allusion is made in them to

the outward form of prayer—or rather to the attitude of supplication which was usual among the Jews—as we may judge from such passages as that in which David says, "Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto Thee; when I lift up my hands towards Thy holy oracle." But there is a deeper significance in Paul's words than an allusion to attitude, when he speaks of—

1. *Holy hands* being lifted up in prayer. He implies that if our hands are defiled by iniquity, or are stained with blood, or are desecrated by the handling of ill-gotten gold, we have no right to pose as the priests of the world. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. The defiled conscience and the unrepented sin are insurmountable barriers between us and God, until we remember the gracious words, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

To the qualification for priesthood, which is found in cleansed hands, must be added that of—

2. *Loving hearts.* In praying we ought to be "without," that is, "delivered from," "wrath and doubting," or rather from wrath and disputatiousness—being free from all revengeful feeling and quarrelsomeness. Has not forgetfulness of this often prevented answers to prayers? When, for example, there prevails in a Church bitterness of feeling between those who lead the devotions, when suspicion and distrust destroy the fellowship of believers, or when anger and resentment are being harboured, how can we sincerely join in the Lord's Prayer, every clause of which is a test of our likeness to Him, and say, "Forgive

us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." No amount of stress laid upon the subsequent petition, "Thy kingdom come," will make up for the paralysing effect of using that earlier prayer as an empty form. "If then, thou remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift, or thy prayer." I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputatiousness.

IV.

WOMAN'S TRUE DIGNITY.

(1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.)

It seems at first sight rather an abrupt descent into a lower sphere when Paul turns from the prayers of the Church to the dress of the women; and there are not wanting those who would expunge from the New Testament, if they could, much that was written by the apostle on this and on some kindred subjects. Probably if they knew, as he did, the state of society in which these women were living and their miserable upbringing, all their right-minded sisters would now approve, without stint or hesitation, every word that he wrote. That Paul thought of women then, exactly as he would have thought of women now, no impartial student of those times would affirm; because, as a matter of fact, women themselves, from the training they received and from the estimation in which they knew themselves to be held, were naturally inferior to what they are now that centuries have passed since their emancipation and ennoblement by Christianity. If we lived in Turkey or in India, we should be better able to appreciate the wisdom of Paul's counsel in respect to the women of his day; and I am not prepared to mitigate or

to apologise for his brave and wise words. Remember it was due to him more than to any other apostle that women had been so far emancipated as they were when this Epistle was written, for it was he who had taught that in Christ Jesus there was neither male nor female. But he grieved over some of the evils which at first arose from the great changes effected in their social position. Seclusion had been rigorously maintained by the customs of those Eastern cities. The picture in the Royal Academy, which represents a young girl, with slippers in her hand, drawing aside the curtain of the seraglio, and stepping across the body of a black slave, who is sleeping with naked sword in his hand, fairly represents the slave-like treatment of women in Ephesus in Paul's days. Indeed, even among the Jews, the women who came to the synagogue were (and still are) kept out of sight in a carefully screened gallery. It was therefore not to be wondered at that the Christian women emancipated from such treatment felt themselves not only at liberty to assert their new-born rights but bound to do so, and that they claimed a prominence and a freedom which were good neither for themselves nor for the Church. And we must not forget that, so far as women had greater publicity in the heathen cities, it was at the risk of the virtuous reputation which Christians would be the most anxious to preserve. The priestesses of the temples, for example, were notoriously immoral, and the Hetairae were not only a recognised, but even a respectable class in Pagan society. You can see, therefore, what boundless possibilities of evil were opened up by the prominence women were claiming for themselves in

Christian assemblies in those cities. There were dangers threatening their moral character, exemplified in Corinth, and others which affected their reputation, which Paul recognised in Ephesus. This glance at the condition of Ephesian society, which will not bear close description, is sufficient to indicate some of the reasons Paul had for his teaching here on the true dignity of woman.

I. *He speaks of it first* NEGATIVELY, declaring that her dignity does not depend upon outward adornment; and this is always and everywhere true. It is probable that the women who came to the Christian assemblies in Ephesus arrayed themselves in costly attire, and sometimes made unbecoming display of their personal charms till the custom was becoming the sensation, if not the scandal, of the city. And, though Paul was well aware that the ladies would resent his interference in such a matter, he boldly condemned, just as Peter did, and in almost the same language, their love of dress and display. "Adorn yourselves," said he, "in modest (or seemly) apparel; not with powdered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."

Now, these plain words are not without just application now. Of course, they are not to be too literally interpreted; but the principle underlying them is sound and Christian. No one professing godliness ought to spend time, and taste, and money to the extent many do on mere personal adornment, as if the body was everything and the mind nothing, or as if the chief end of a woman's life was to win admiration not respect, to please man and not God. Even from a lower standpoint it is a

mistake, and I venture to think that many a marriage has been prevented, and many a possibly happy home is fraught with anxiety, because of an expenditure on dress, which cannot be reasonably or rightly met. There are lives which might have been unspeakably happier if only they had been united, if the two young people had been content to face the world together with plain fare and simple habits. Anything which fosters love of dress, vanity, and display, whether it be found in companionship or in amusement, ought resolutely and for Christ's sake to be put away. Listen to John Ruskin, "I say further, that as long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long can there be no question at all but that splendour of dress is a crime." Slovenliness and carelessness no Christian should ever be guilty of, but the true follower of the Lord cannot let the mind be much occupied by mere questions of appearance and dress.

II. WOMAN'S DIGNITY IS NEXT SET FORTH POSITIVELY.—"I will," says Paul, "that women adorn themselves in

1. "*Modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety.*" —It is curious that in modern reprints of the English version the foolish and unmeaning word "shamefacedness" should have crept in, for it was evidently substituted by some wiseacre among the printers instead of the expressive and beautiful word "shamefastness." In the English Hexapla, I see that Wyclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, and the original Authorised Version of 1611, all use that word, which is restored in the Revised Version. It expresses, as well as any word can, the idea in the Greek,

which denotes the inward feeling which will not permit any overpassing of womanly modesty and reserve, and which will turn with loathing from that which is evil as that which cannot be looked upon or thought about. And this is conjoined with "*sobriety*" or with self-rule, which exercises absolute control over every passion and every pleasure. No one can overrate the influence of these. Society owes its tone more to women than to men. What they frown upon will be tabooed; what they thoughtlessly tolerate will grow in evil influence. Therefore, let every woman keep up the tone of the conversation in which she takes part; let her exact the respect and even the reverence which is due to her sex, and discourage at the very beginning the flippancy and familiarity too common in society; and let her loathing of every form of vice be so evident that from her pure presence it will shrink away abashed as from an angel of light.

2. *But in addition to this influence, which may be almost unconsciously exercised, the Christian woman is to adorn herself with "good works."* She often does this behind the veil which is drawn over every home. There are those whose "good works" are noble in their self-sacrifice and far-reaching in their issues of whom the Church hears little. Mothers teaching and warning their children; wives pleading again and again with wayward, erring husbands; and patient with them still though all else have lost hope; sisters leading their brothers with the strong hand of affection in the paths of purity and truth. Many a man can sympathise with

that soldier who said, "I can stand before the enemy, but I cannot stand before my sister's prayers." And who does not know of more public work done by Christian women—such as that of our visitors and Sunday-school teachers; of saintly pleaders with the drunkards and the profligate;—of noble women whose writings have purged the atmosphere of moral corruption; of heroines like Florence Nightingale and Sister Dora, who have trodden closely in the footsteps of the Lord. These have been clothed with "good works." They have been their robe of adornment, their "habit" which gives them likeness to the angels.

> "Oh, what makes woman lovely? Virtue, faith,
> And gentleness in suffering; an endurance
> Through scorn or trial: these call beauty forth,
> Give it the stamp celestial, and admit it
> To sisterhood with angels!"

V.

THE POSITION OF WOMAN.

(1 Tim. ii. 11–15.)

This was—

I. A Bold Declaration on the part of the apostle. "Let the woman learn in silence (or rather in quietness) with all subjection, for I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in quietness;" but the course he followed in this matter was wise, in the condition of life then prevailing. In our days there is no doubt a change of those conditions, which would make the rigorous application of such a rule unwise and unjust. Women, in larger numbers now than then, are of necessity independent, and are compelled to earn their own livelihood, and make their own homes; and being, in some respects, the weaker, they should have no artificial barriers put in the way of their doing so. There are disabilities, the relics of feudal times, which slowly, yet surely, are being swept away, though much still remains to be done. Under our English laws, for example, a woman may be compelled to pay taxes, though she has no right to influence the election of those who impose them—as her gardener or coachman may do;

she may have won property, or wage, which until lately she had no right to call her own. Acts of cruelty perpetrated upon her by her husband bring upon him but a trifling punishment, and gross wrong which will ruin her whole future may be committed, at less risk to the criminal than if he shot a pheasant in a neighbouring wood. Injustice is not out of our statute-books yet, and no one would have led a crusade against it more vigorously than Paul. While the law is thus open to improvement, and society too, there has been such advance made among women that they are far more fitted intellectually and morally than in Paul's day for taking part in the work of the Church. We readily admit and heartily rejoice over this fact, and acknowledge that the Church's work would be paralysed if left to men only. But the general law laid down by Paul still holds good. The public work of life, whether in the world or in the Church, is, broadly speaking, not woman's but man's. His is the life of turmoil, hers of quietude. She is receptive; he is aggressive: and it is not so much in her conspicuous activity as in her yielding affectionateness that her true strength is found. Does any one say this is claiming for man what is best, and giving to woman what is inferior? I point you to the words of the Lord Jesus, at the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount, to prove that in the judgment of God the very reverse is true. When He said, "Blessed are the meek, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers," did He not mean that in those qualities the highest bliss is to be found? Nay, His own example, and His death on the cross,

suffice to teach us that it is through submission and self-abnegation that the highest throne is won. In the apostle's view it was woman's province to exhibit the loftiest ideal of the Divine life; and if she imperiously claims to be the teacher and ruler of man, she reverses the Divine order, and loses her distinctive vocation in the economy of God. This the apostle proceeds to show—

II. By a Scriptural Argument.—He goes back to Eden for a justification of his teaching—for he was accustomed to regard the facts of the Old Testament as symbolical and parabolical sources of perpetual instruction—and he finds in the creation and in the fall of our first parents an illustration of the relations of the sexes. "Adam was first formed," says he, "then Eve." Man's priority in creation, standing as he did alone and in immediate relation to God, was an indication of his place and power, as having the headship over her whom God made to be his helpmeet. But if the helpmeet becomes the head, and the head weakly yields, there comes an overthrow of the Divine order, as there did come in Paradise.

The next verse plainly states how the violation of primeval order brought about disaster, and this is evidently adduced as an example of the evil which would arise if in the management of affairs woman should quit her proper sphere. Practical shrewdness and discernment; the firm and regulative judgment which should characterise the ruler, are less hers than man's. Her very excellencies, connected as they are with the finer sensibilities and the stronger impulses of a noble and

loving nature, disqualify her for the headship, whereas the balance in man's nature is the other way; in the direction of the intellectual and the governing. Forgetting this, Eve affected to decide a testing question for herself and her husband, and she was overreached by a more subtle and ruthless intelligence—"the serpent beguiled her; she was deceived." But it is here asserted that "Adam was not deceived," and was therefore more guilty, because with his eyes open to the wrong he yielded to conjugal love. In other words, the will and the judgment were sacrificed to the affections — the essence of moral fall.

Now this may seem a far-fetched argument to some, but it would not be easy to find a more vivid illustration of the essential difference between the masculine and the feminine natures, and it is this difference which is the basis of the apostle's argument for the counsel he has been giving here. But between those so different in nature there need be no contest as to inferiority and superiority, any more than between the beauty of the flower or the beauty of the mountain on whose side it blooms.

> "The woman's cause is man's. They rise or sink
> Together. Dwarfed or godlike, bond or free;
> If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
> How shall men grow? . . . Let her be
> All that not harms distinctive womanhood;
> For woman is not undeveloped man,
> But diverse. Could we make her as the man,
> Sweet love were slain, whose dearest bond is this,
> Not like to like, but like in difference:

Yet in the long years liker must they grow ;
The man be more of woman, she of man ;
He gain in sweetness, and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world ;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
More as the double-natured poet, each ;
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words."*

Paul closes his remarks on woman by alluding to—

III. A BLESSED ASSURANCE.—"Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing;" or, as the R. V. has it, "through the childbearing." Perhaps there was some hint here of the blessing that comes through pain and travail, of whatsoever kind it be; and also of the great and noble work possible only to motherhood. But the more correct translation gives us rather the thought of what may be called pre-eminently "*the* childbearing"—when Jesus Christ, the world's Saviour, was born of a woman, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh—for it was thus that the great promise was fulfilled which brought a gleam of hope into the darkness of Eve's despair, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." In Him, the perfect Man, Christ Jesus, is all the winsomeness and gentleness of womanhood, combined with more than the strength and earnestness of manhood, and it is the highest ideal we can set before us as men and women, each of us in our own sphere, to proclaim and display the perfect and Divine beauty of our Lord; the one chiefly in the quietude of home, the other chiefly in the activities of the world, ever praying

* Tennyson.

to the God of all grace for "faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety." Through Christ we receive salvation, and in likeness to Christ we find our glorification; so that if we fail to recognise Him, and live for Him, we fail for ever to attain God's highest ideal of manhood, or of womanhood.

How many fail thus! yet there is not one whom God does not seek to arouse to a consciousness of those higher things, and some are feeling unsatisfied because they have them not. They sit with hearts empty, as she sat in the picture I saw so lately, entitled "Love's labour lost." A beautiful young girl, whose childhood is swiftly passing away, sits clasping her knees as she gazes with the strange far away look of one lost in thought. The puppets and pleasures that have contented her till now, can satisfy her no longer. The basket of toys is untouched, the efforts of the girl-attendants to amuse her are unheeded; the singers and musicians entering the room do not receive a single glance, and the pet fawn is wondering that no caress is given to her now. The girl has been aroused to something more—higher and better—than these, and if you have had an inward awakening nothing will satisfy you but Christ, for in the flush of your girlhood or in the dignity of your womanhood—in the hopes of your youth or in the activities of your manhood, He still says, "If any one thirst let him come unto Me and drink. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

SERMONETTES ON THIRD CHAPTER.

I.

THE IDEAL MINISTER.

(1 Tim. iii. 1–7.)

The apostle who most boldly maintained the brotherhood of believers, clearly recognised the necessity for order and office in Christian communities. Even in those early days, when organisation was naturally inchoate, there existed bishops and deacons, who had special functions to fulfil—to whose qualifications for office Paul calls Timothy's attention in the passage before us. Every one who thoughtfully considers the working of a human society, whether it be political or commercial, social or religious in its basis, will see the necessity that exists for distribution of work; and unless such distribution is to be continually changing and leaving affairs in a constant state of flux, offices must be thereby created. The old adage, "What is every one's business is nobody's business," expresses the popular recognition of the truth—that it is wise policy for each member of a community to have appointed and recognised duties; and since we do not shake off the coils of human nature when we become Christians, this holds good in the Christian Church also. We can understand, therefore, how it came to pass that

bishops and deacons had their recognised offices and responsibilities at a very early period in Church history.

But these men were bound by the fundamental principles of their faith to think humbly of themselves and of their offices; for this was a law in Christ's Kingdom, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." Their influence (as this passage indicates) depended upon character and reputation, and was not the result of office, nor was it the effect of extraordinary gifts or talents. "A good report among those that were without," was a more important qualification than the fact of ecclesiastical appointment, and their duties were such as required Divine grace rather than human ordination for their performance. We read nothing here or elsewhere in the New Testament of sacrificial services, and of sacramental rites, which only a caste could perform; nor was a peculiar right to hear confessions and pronounce absolution, given to any in the Church of Christ. Hence no stress is laid upon the vestments of bishops, but much is said about the habits of their lives; and their blameless relations in the Church, in the home, and in the world, are insisted upon, to the exclusion of any mention of appointment by ecclesiastical superiors. Nothing is said as to the origin of their offices nor as to the mode of their appointment to them, and we are left to infer their peculiar duties from incidental allusions, so simple and so free were the apostolic arrangements in comparison with those which prevailed in the third and even in the second century of our faith. The development of a pastor into a priest, and of a priest into

a Pope, would require a discourse from an ecclesiastical Darwin to explain fully; but the process would be simple enough when human nature was allowed to triumph over the new principles of Christ's Kingdom. On the one hand, the strong will and the greater ability of an ambitious pastor would soon win for him priority over his weaker brethren; and on the other hand, there has always been a lamentable tendency in men and women to assign to others those responsibilities which are really laid by God upon each of us. Priestcraft is the outcome of unregenerate human nature, and is utterly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is not needful that we should spend our time in demonstrating that "bishop" and "presbyter" were two words used in the New Testament to denote one and the same office. Alford uses the term "overseer" instead of bishop in his translation, in order, to use his own words, "to avoid the chance of identifying it with a present and different office," that, namely, of one who is set over the clergy, not over a congregation. But the word "overseer" has no sacred or ecclesiastical associations connected with it, so that we prefer using the word "pastor" as the true modern equivalent of "bishop" or "presbyter," expressing as it does the idea of watchful, loving, responsible oversight. Dealing, as these letters do, with the duties of a Pastor, they are properly called "the Pastoral" Epistles. If it be asked why two words were used in the New Testament to express the same office, the answer is simple. *Πρεσβύτεροι* had been employed for generations to denote the presiding heads of the synagogal communi-

ties, and would naturally be used by Jewish Christians to describe those occupying a similar position in their churches. Whereas ἐπισκόποι was a Greek word, which denoted primarily the officers sent by the Athenians to take the oversight of subject cities, and was then transferred from the civil to the spiritual sphere, to denote the men who had the oversight of Christian communities. We must never lose sight of the fact that there was a combination of Jewish and Greek influences in the earlier years of Christianity. When Paul was writing to Titus, he uses the two words πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος interchangeably, because in Crete the converts were drawn from among both Jews and Greeks. When in his first missionary tour he set some over the churches in which the nucleus was Jewish, he speaks of "presbyters" only. Here writing to Timothy in the great Gentile city of Ephesus, he speaks of "επισκοποι," that is, bishops or pastors. In this passage he expounds the counsel he had already given to the Ephesian "presbyters," when he stood on the shore at Miletus, and said, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

"This is a true saying"—re-echoed by the Church in all ages—"if a man seeketh the office of a pastor he seeketh a good work." Now a pastor is only a somewhat more prominent example of other Christians, who in missions and Sunday schools and homes do what is essentially the same work. They therefore ought to exhibit charac-

teristics similar to those demanded of him. Hence this particular example may serve purposes of general instruction.

I. THE MORAL CHARACTERISTICS of the ideal pastor are strongly insisted upon. Strangely enough, nothing is said about his piety, his love to God, his communion with Him, his delight in Him, his devotion to Him; but this is naturally presupposed, as the basis of the rest. It is not alluded to here, partly because Timothy did not require to be reminded that personal religion is the first essential in all spiritual work, and partly because he was less able to judge of inward piety in others than of the qualities mentioned here. Every Christian teacher, however lowly or however prominent his sphere, must speak *with* God before he speaks *for* God. Like Moses, he must ascend the mountain of communion before he gives utterance to God's commands among the people; and we may well pray that in and through us (unworthy and sinful though we are) the words of Cowper may be fulfilled—

> "When one that holds communion with the skies
> Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
> And once more mingles with us meaner things,
> 'Tis ev'n as if an angel shook his wings;
> Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
> That tells us whence his treasures are supplied."

Communion with God is pre-supposed. But moral characteristics strengthened by this communion are mentioned here as being expected of all Christians and pre-eminently of those who would be leaders among them.

1. *Self-rule* is one of the principal of these, and it is

to display itself in all directions. The bishop is to be *sober*, exercising habitual self-restraint, not only in respect of intoxicating drinks, but also in respect of indulgence in pleasures of all kinds, setting an example of dominion over the carnal and sensuous. How woeful the effects of carelessness about this every experienced Christian knows too well! In one of the large churches of Lisbon, while listening to the sonorous voice of the priest who was intoning service, our guide whispered, "Ah, sir, you should see him in the evening; he is drunk every night." The fact explained to some extent the scorn and contempt felt by the more intelligent people in that city for the Christian faith, represented, or rather misrepresented, by such men. Happily, in this respect, the change from the condition of things prevailing a century ago in England is marvellous, and there is not a branch of the Christian Church where such indulgence would now for an instant be tolerated.

But *temper* is to be as much under control as other passions, for the Christian teacher must be no "brawler," no striker, "but patient." Outbursts of ill temper are as harmful as grosser vices in their effect upon a church, and we need much grace to "keep our tongues between the hedge of our teeth" (as old Homer says), and to be patient under provocation, not answering railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. Ours should be what Matthew Arnold beautifully calls "sweet reasonableness," the willingness to treat others with perfect equity, which is moderated and pervaded by tender sympathy with weakness, and a due allowance for extenuating circum-

stances or peculiarities of temperament. To speak gently, and yet firmly; to do the right thing, and yet to do it in the most courteous way, requires abounding grace; and because we all fail at times in this we must be patient and gentle with each other—not among the "brawlers," who like the excitement of discord, nor among the "strikers," who hit hard blows on sensitive hearts without remorse or pity.

2. Again, *sound judgment* is a qualification much needed by every pastor and teacher. This is no doubt one reason of Paul's for urging on Timothy, as he does in the sixth verse, that a pastor in the Church should not be a "novice," *i.e.*, a recent convert—a word of warning still required by those who thrust into perilous prominence Christians who have only just tasted that the Lord is gracious. It is no wonder that these fulfil Paul's prediction, and becoming puffed up with pride fall into the condemnation of the devil, who fell through vain-glory. If the young life of a plant is exposed to the glare of the sunshine, death will supervene. And in the life of every creature—insect, and bird, and beast, and most of all in the life of man—the period of development must precede the period of manifestation. Let us all learn before we attempt to teach. The true religious leader should have the warm heart, and may be thankful if he has also the ready tongue; but he needs besides these some experience of life and a practical knowledge of men. Many a student has failed in the ministry because, with all his knowledge of books, he had no knowledge of his fellows. Most of the qualities men-

tioned here by Paul may be summed up in what has been called *sanctified common sense*, and it is needed in the Church as much as in business.

3. *Another characteristic of the ideal minister should be open-heartedness and open-handedness.* The phrase "given to hospitality" in A. V., or more correctly "a lover of strangers," denotes what was relatively more important then than now. Many disciples were engaged in evangelistic work. Passing from city to city they found few conveniences for their shelter, and in such public places of resort as were open ungodliness and laxity of morals prevailed to a hideous degree. For their safety, morally as well as physically, it was necessary that the Christians should receive them into their homes, and in this work the pastors and deacons properly took the lead.

The exercise of this grace of hospitality called for an unsuspiciousness of temper which might lead to imposition then just as it does now. But painful and vexatious as this may be, and often is, it is better to be deceived occasionally by a rogue than to become hard in dealing with deserving sufferers. Our Lord was kind to us and even died for us while we were yet sinners, and as His disciples we must be ready to give, hoping for nothing again, being kind to the unthankful and to the unworthy. Byron well says—

> "Suspicion is a heavy armour, and
> With its own weight impedes more than it protects!"

II. A few words ought to be added upon the subject of THE RELATIONS OF THE MINISTER TO THOSE AROUND HIM, his right relation with God being pre-supposed.

1. *He is to be the husband of one wife.* A phrase which has been very frequently discussed. It is to be taken surely in its restrictive meaning, and is aimed against the polygamous practices which then widely prevailed, fostered as they were by facility of divorce. In some of the islands of the South Seas a similar problem has to be faced by modern missionaries. Before conversion a chief sometimes has several wives; but afterwards this is no longer tolerable; yet unless suitable provision can be made for their protection and support, the dismission of his wives, right in one sense, may be the cause of other evils. But the law of God is clear on the subject, and missionaries would certainly counsel that no one should be recognised as a native teacher if he had more than one wife. This is what Paul urged. At the same time the celibacy of the clergy is implicitly condemned by the apostle, and wisely so. For there is no doubt that Christians are taught more by domestic experience, by the sorrows, the joys, and the anxieties of home life, than by mere intellectual speculations, however lofty and spiritual they may seem to be.

2. *Then allusion is made to the pastor's own house as distinguished from God's house.* It is more easily managed, because there is in it intenser love and a more limited sphere. So it is urged that any leader in the Church should rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. On which Dr. Reynolds has beautifully said—"The child-life of the pastor's home should suggest the sacredness of a temple and the order of a palace." And is not this true for us all? Is it not

in the home that we are the most tested, and is it not there we can best glorify God? And is it not in ruling the home that we may by God's grace win the kind of authority we ought to exercise for Christ in the Church and in the world? Look on your home as God's training-ground for you, remembering that in it you may understand the depths and heights of spiritual fellowship, and in it you may already enjoy foretastes of the bliss of Heaven.

3. *The relation the pastor should hold towards the world.*—Much stress is laid in this passage on being "blameless," and having "a good report of them that are without"—those, namely, who are outside the kingdom of Christ. We cannot afford, as Christ's representatives, to defy the world's opinion about us so far as moral reputation is concerned. The world is a poor judge of doctrine, of motive, and of religious hopes and thoughts; but it is a keen, and on the whole an accurate judge of character; and when the members and leaders of the Church are recognised by the world as honest, sincere, trusty, pure men and women, Christ will win the day against His foes. Care much then for the cultivation of character, but be jealous also of reputation; for among the wiles of the devil which Paul speaks of here, is the attempt to injure the reputation of Christians, especially of ministers of Christ's Gospel—because if one of them breaks down in good repute there is exultation as over a standard-bearer slain. Let us be more watchful over our own reputation and over that of our brethren, and let us seek after consistency in trivial things, for the qualities mentioned here

appear to be comparatively small. It is not obvious unfaithfulness in duty, nor deficiency in special gifts, nor gross crime in behaviour, against which we are warned; but the ungoverned temper, the unbridled tongue, the foolish indiscretions, the careless walk which mar Christ-like beauty and destroy Christian influence so often and so sadly. And when we cry, in view of our shortcomings, "Who is sufficient for these things?" let us cheer ourselves by saying, "Our sufficiency is of God," praying for grace not only to speak of heaven, but to lead the way, thus fulfilling Pollok's description of the Christian teacher—

> "He was humble, kind, forgiving, meek;
> Easy to be entreated, gracious, mild;
> And, with all patience and affection, taught,
> Rebuked, persuaded, solaced, counselled, warned,
> In fervent style and manner. All
> Saw in his face contentment, in his life
> The path to glory and perpetual joy."

II.

THE IDEAL DEACON.

(1 Tim. iii. 8–13.)

Whether the duties performed by the deacons in the Apostolic Church were like those undertaken by officers so designated in the Episcopal, or in the Nonconforming Churches of our day, the characteristics required are worthy of consideration, because no one holding any office in Christ's Church should be destitute of them.

I. Deacons should be of Noble Character (v. 8).—This is essential, and if money, or talent, or love of pre-eminence are substituted for it, a deserved curse will fall upon the community preferring these.

1. *They were to be grave, i.e.*, of serious deportment; not sharing in the follies and gaieties of pleasure-loving cities like Ephesus, but revered as men living in a higher and purer atmosphere.

2. *Not double-tongued*, saying one thing to this man and another to that, and thus giving rise to misunderstandings and differences. Gossip is sometimes as harmful as slander.

3. *Not given to much wine.* Such temperance should be a characteristic of any true Christian, and is absolutely essential to one who would lead and represent the Church.

4. *Not greedy of filthy lucre*, or "base gain." Some

gain is the fair and God-appointed stimulus to toil. Success in business, when it is won by integrity and diligence, is a sign of fitness for service in the Church rather than a disqualification for it. But when a man makes money the chief object of life, and will gain it even by evil means, and holds with a tight hand what he wins, he is unfit for office as a Christian, for he is one of those who are "lovers of money more than lovers of God."

II. DEACONS SHOULD BE STRONG IN THE FAITH (v. 9).—"Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." *The faith* means the truth apprehended and believed by the Church. It is called *the mystery*, because it had once been hidden, though it was now revealed. It is to be *held* in intelligent and firm conviction, not formally or loosely; and to be held, moreover, *in a pure conscience*, which will not palter with convictions, nor change the truth of God to please men, nor lower the Christian ideal of life in order to get on in the world.

III. DEACONS SHOULD BE TRUSTED BY THE CHURCH (v. 10).—"Let these also first be proved," for their qualifications ought to be evidenced and recognised, in order that they may have the confidence of their brethren. When any citizen of Athens was appointed by lot, or chosen by suffrage, to hold public office, he was obliged, before entering on its duties, to submit to δοκιμασια, a scrutiny into his life and conduct, and it is the verb representing that noun which the apostle uses here. He means that if a man were chosen to office who was known to be unworthy, any member of the community might object to him, for it is of the first importance that confidence should be felt in those who lead the Church.

The next verse may refer either to the "*wives*" of the deacons or to those holding office as deaconesses, for both would, no doubt, co-operate in Christian service; and consideration of the greater separation then prevailing between the sexes will show that there must have been some work which only women could do. The fidelity of Christian women in the early years of Christianity is attested in the bloody pages of persecution. In all ages, as well as on Calvary, women have stood nearest to the Cross! They were to be *grave*, of serious deportment; *not slanderers*, but ruling their tongues in the Church and outside it; *sober* or temperate, exercising habitual self-control; and *faithful in all things*—in short, to have about them the purity and sanctity of true Christian womanhood. (The next verse repeats the qualification mentioned in verse 4.)

IV. Deacons may look for the Recompense of Reward (ver. 13).—The phrase *purchase to themselves a good degree*, or, as in Revised Version, "gain to themselves a good standing," includes the idea of obtaining high reputation amongst the brethren; and that is not without its value. But it implies also, advance in faith, in courage, and in wisdom, as the result of active and faithful service. And this is the preparation for and the pledge of the honour which will be given in the last great day, honour which will vary among the saints according to the measure of their capacity and fidelity.

Therefore let each make the best and most of his power in Christ's service; seeking his own place in the fellowship of the Church, and then filling it till the call comes to rest and reward in heaven.

III.

THE HOUSE OF GOD.

(1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.)

A wise use of letter-writing is among the gifts which Christians should sedulously cultivate. Some may be reached by a letter who prove unapproachable in conversation, and many a message of warning and of comfort has thus been delivered by the wise-hearted. Indeed, we have known invalids whose lives were so full of suffering that they seemed debarred from all usefulness, who, through their letters to the sad and sinful, have proved among the noblest and most successful of the Lord's witnesses. Experience of Divine grace has not only consecrated them but has made them the means of enriching others; and many of us can thank God for written words of love and wisdom, which in a time of need have brought us comfort and counsel. Timothy was thus helped, for this letter first addressed to him, which now lies open before us, was just what he needed to teach him how he ought to behave (or conduct himself) in the house of God.

Young men are not always ready as Timothy was to

welcome such counsel, even though it comes from those whose experience has been deeper and wider than their own. In a difficult and delicate position they sometimes fail to see their responsibility, and the seriousness of the issues which may result from a false or foolish step, and thus personal reputation may be lost and the interests of the Church suffer. A willingness to receive instruction, a recognition of our own proneness to error, a reverent regard for men older and wiser than ourselves, are among the attributes of the genuine disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, for the words are as true now as ever, "The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach his way." There was grace in Timothy which enabled him wisely to receive and use good counsel, just as there was grace in Paul which fitted him to guide and cheer his friend. The apostle spoke of what he himself knew through fellowship with God and through experience of the difficulties Timothy was meeting, and it was the fact that he was no dreaming theorist which gave such peculiar weight to his counsels. It is said that Hannibal, one of the ablest generals of ancient or of modern times, once heard an address delivered upon the art of war, and was asked afterwards what he thought of it. With his usual rugged abruptness he replied, "Well, I've heard many an old poltroon, but I never heard such a poltroon as this, for he is talking about war when he knows nothing about it." That is the spirit in which counsels would naturally be received from one whom Paul calls a novice; but when they come from one who has lived near God and done brave and successful service,

the wise man will listen and obey with reverence and promptitude. And we may be sure that it was thus Timothy read and re-read these words of counsel about prayer, about pastors and deacons, about arrangements—social and religious—to be made in the Church, respecting which the apostle says here, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God."

It is evident from this verse that Paul was quite uncertain about his own future. He hoped to go to Ephesus "shortly," *i.e.*, more quickly, sooner than, the foregoing counsels might have led the reader to expect. But it was possible that he might be delayed or altogether prevented from going, and meantime abuses might spring up, and errors assert themselves. Timothy is therefore fairly warned against such dangers. It is always a harder task to set things right when they have once gone wrong than it is to keep things right from the first. This is very true in matters of character. Teach and warn your children in the home or in the class, and by God's blessing they may never know the depths of iniquity of which we often hear; but once let innocence be defiled and character injured, and how pitifully hard is the work of rescue! The duty of the Church is chiefly to save from sin, and therefore God puts under her care so large a proportion of the children in this land that they may be taught and warned and led to a knowledge of the Great Redeemer; yet the Church must not overlook the further and harder duty of going

out to seek and to save them that are lost. Like Paul, remember, fellow-Christians, that time is short, that opportunity is fleeting; therefore speak, write, and act for Christ and His cause now, before the night cometh in which no man can work.

Let us consider for a short time—

The house of God, under which figure the apostle here speaks of the Church of Christ. What is implied in it?

I. The House of God is the Dwelling-place of God. The phrase, "the house of God," is borrowed from the Old Testament, in which it is frequently applied to the temple at Jerusalem—the place where God met with His people, and revealed Himself at the mercy-seat; and sometimes it is used by the prophets to denote the covenant people themselves, giving pledge and promise of New Testament usage. For it is no longer in and through a material building that God reveals Himself, but in living temples. Our Lord taught us this in relation to Himself when, referring to His body which would be broken on the cross, He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Through the humanity of our Lord, God made Himself known. In Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily. But the human body of the Lord Jesus has passed away, and now is substituted for it His mystical body—the Church, in which God dwells, and through which He makes Himself known. It is this Church of Christ, consisting of all believers the world over, realised as it was in the community at Ephesus, of which Paul says it is "the house of God," because He

dwells in it, and makes His presence felt in every impulse of righteousness and in every outburst of spiritual service.

How grand is the phrase, "the Church of *the living God!*" Paul loved to contrast "the living God" with those dead gods of heathenism, which had ears yet could not hear, and hands yet could not help; and to contrast Him, too, with those dead abstractions of philosophy which then, as now, would substitute a vague impersonal force for a Father who loves us, and who yearns over us even in our wrongdoing.

Is that true and living God consciously realised as present in our midst? Is He adored and served with unquestioning obedience and devotion? It is His indwelling which makes the Church His House, and distinguishes it from every other community of which the world knows anything. The royal palace is not necessarily a building of finer proportions, nor enriched with more beautiful surroundings, nor filled with more costly treasures than others around it (Sutherland House is more palatial than Buckingham Palace), but the distinction of the royal palace is that it is the seat and habitation of the king or queen. Oh that we may rejoice in the presence of our King, and that to all of us He may be in deed and in truth "the living God;" for only as we know Him, and reveal Him to the world, do we fulfil our destiny as a Church.

There are Churches where He is no longer felt to be the Inspirer and Purifier of His people; Churches which are defiled and desecrated by worldliness. They are like

an old abbey I saw on the banks of the river the other day. Originally it was built and set apart for God's worship, but centuries afterwards it became the haunt of men whose boast it was that they believed in no God, and over the door of the place in which God's will was once done, they wrote the motto of their club—"Do what you wish." May we be saved from putting our wishes in the place of God's will, and from substituting for His word the visionary speculations of those who know nothing of Him whom Paul calls "the living God."

II. The House of God should be the Abode of Love.—The Church is not only the place where the Father dwells, but where His sons and daughters live in mutual confidence under the sway of supreme love to Him. It is this loving confidence which is the essence of a home. A splendid house with luxurious appointments is not a real home if love is not in it. But if children love each other, and revere their parents, the home may be happy without a single luxury. Nor is the home broken up, though according to the modern fashion of suburban life, change from house to house is frequent. Similarly it is of the essence of the Church, that unity, peace, and concord shall be among its members; for when discord and strife, self-seeking and jealousy, begin to assert themselves, the fellowship cannot be called "the House of God," for He is the God of peace, and His nature is love. It is here the Church has so often failed. No doubt its lapses from the faith of the Gospel have been disastrous in their effects; but

its failure to exhibit the Christian temper and spirit has been still more fatal to its influence over the world. Noisy contentions, factious disputes, sectarian bitterness, mutual suspicion; these have paralysed the Church's strength, and have made it the butt of the worldling's ridicule. Yet the world wants to see, and to enter into an ideal fellowship such as Christ often spoke of. Contests between capital and labour, fierce struggles for pre-eminence in society, contempt of the poor and hatred of the rich; wars and rumours of wars, distracting thought and unsettling commerce; cruel selfishness so greedy of gain that it will rob the poor because he is poor; ay, and hideous revolting corruption making our cities like Sodom and Gomorrah in their wickedness;—all these things call for the God of purity and love to reveal Himself, and He will do so through a purified Church, which will not only proclaim His laws of righteousness but will exhibit in its fellowship the blessedness of a pure brotherhood, in which each has learnt to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself.

III. The House of God should be the sphere of Service.—The Church is our Lord's instrument of working. He does not personally descend from Heaven to right the wrongs which prevail, nor does He send His angels to proclaim the woe that will follow sin, and the blessedness which will follow pardon; but He uses the Church, the Ecclesia—that is, the people He has called—the saints who have been summoned into fellowship by the clarion voice of His love. But the Church is merely

the aggregation of individuals. It is strong in proportion as each member is active and earnest, and therefore when the Lord left His house for the far country He "gave to every man his work." As every disciple was made an "apostle," though not numbered among the Twelve—as every fisherman who followed Jesus became a fisher of men, so every one loving the Master is to be serving Him. It is admitted in theory by all communicants, but it is contradicted in fact by multitudes. Instead of fulfilling the description given of the faithful Christian "always abounding in the work of the Lord," many a man deserves the epitaph "always avoiding the work of the Lord." Do not lose sight of your personal responsibility in the largeness of the community of which you form a part; do not avert your eyes from work in your new surroundings because you think you have been fairly faithful in the old sphere. The day of life is not yet over for you, and the Master looks for fidelity till the evening shadows fall; and that servant will be blessed who is ever ready to hear the "well done" from His lips.

But our text chiefly lays stress on the fact that—

IV. The House of God is to be the Maintainer of God's Truth.—There seems to be little doubt that Paul meant what the grammatical structure of the sentence states—that the Church, which is the House of God, is also "the pillar and ground (or basement) of the truth." The mixture of metaphors is not at all uncommon in the New Testament, notably in St. Peter's Epistle, where in one breath he speaks of believers as "living stones" and as "a holy priesthood." Some, however, suggest that the

reference here is to Timothy, not to the Church; but though the apostles are once called "pillars," no one is ever called the "basement" or foundation of truth, save the Lord Christ Jesus. Others put a full stop after the words "the living God," and begin the new sentence thus—"The pillar and ground of the truth, and confessedly great is the mystery of godliness." This is unnatural, abrupt, and unfair, and has been resorted to chiefly by Protestant commentators because they object to the statement that the Church is the foundation of truth. Rome bases her claim to universal homage on this and a few kindred passages, maintaining that she, as the true Church, is the fontal source and the infallible organ of Divine truth. But let us never pervert Scripture, even though it be to combat extravagant and impious pretensions. We must not do evil that good may come; nor is there any need to do so in this case, for no man's teaching is or was more crushingly antagonistic to Papal pretensions than Paul's. What we have to remember and call attention to is this—that "the truth" is not of the Church's making nor of the Church's finding, but of God's revealing. It is not *from* her, but *through* her from heaven, that the revelation comes, and if she perverts, or combats, or ignores what she receives, she at once ceases to be the pillar and basement of the truth. This verse, therefore, constitutes not the claim of the Church but the test of the Church; for it is by her fidelity to revealed truth that she is to be judged. God has manifested Himself through the Word, which presents to us His well-beloved Son—the image of the Invisible, who by His death won for us

salvation, and by His life gives us promise and hope of the glorious future. We have no uncertainty to preach; no mere speculations to unfold; no variable God, changeful with each age in character and demands, to present. We are not like the god-maker in Pompeii, who used to make all the parts of the image except the face, but left that till he knew what the purchaser would like; and then he would give with equal expertness Minerva, or Juno, or Venus, or the great Jove himself. God forbid that this process should be carried into our pulpits and literature; for if it does, the day will come to England, as it did to Athens, when men will erect their altar "to the unknown God." May He make every Church to be "the pillar and ground of the truth," "the basement" on which it securely rests amid the fluctuations of human thought, and "the pillar" bearing it aloft that all may see and recognise it.

The Church, then, is to be what Christ was, the witness of the truth. It is through human experience that the world will know it. God's truth cannot become influential and living if it is left in texts and creeds, in symbols and in formulas. It must enter into men's consciousness; it must become a living experience; it must find expression in character and action, and reveal itself in love, worship, and obedience. Why, even scientific truths would soon become valueless, and we should be glad to bury the dead theories out of our sight, if they were in statement and proposition only. They need the living, thinking, earnest men as the pillar and basement of them; and if men of science were actuated by base motives or by party spirit,

and proved unfaithful to their trust, that trust would pass into other hands. In religious truth the Jews were thus supplanted by the Gentiles; and in view of that punishment of unfaithfulness, we are called upon to realise our responsibility, as those who may themselves know, and may then fearlessly maintain, the truth as it is in Jesus.

IV.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

(1 Tim. iii. 16.)

The greatness and importance of the truth which the Church was to maintain is given as a motive to fidelity on the part of Christians. Their position was like that of the lighthouse-keepers. If they neglect their duty and no light gleams over the sea, many, of whom they know nothing, may be hurried on to wreck and death.

"Without controversy," *i.e.*, confessedly among all who have heard it, "great is the mystery of godliness." The word "mystery" with Paul never means a revealed doctrine hard to be understood, as it does commonly now, but what was hidden from man until God revealed it. For the truths of a divine religion are *revealed*. They must be accepted as statements of fact, for they can neither be discovered by research nor proved by reason. Above the strife of parties and the janglings of false teachers is this "mystery," this "opened secret of the Divine life," just as above the scarred rocks on the mountain side are the snow-clad summits in the sunshine —smooth, and pure, and calm. And that mystery is incarnate in the Christ of God, as He is revealed now

through His Church, but once in His proper humanity, to which reference is made here.

The word "*God*" in the passage (as is stated in the margin of the Revised Version) has no sufficient evidence. Abruptly, with a pronoun, Paul begins the sentence, much as the 87th Psalm begins, "*His* foundation in the holy mountain," what follows being enough to indicate to whom the Psalmist refers. Here the understood antecedent is evidently Christ Jesus, and the abruptness of the expression may be accounted for by the supposition that it was a part of a creed or hymn familiar to the early Christians. The great revelation of the Divine life, of the religious life, is Christ Jesus, of whom the apostle states three contrasted facts.

I. The Contrast between Flesh and Spirit.—"He was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit." It could not be properly said of a mere man that he was "manifested" in the flesh, for the expression implies pre-existent being, just as from the appearing of a flower we argue that life had existed previously unseen in seed or bulb. The phrase is equivalent to that in John i., "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

But He was "justified (against gainsayers, as being what He claimed to be) in the Spirit." The reference may be to the Holy Spirit who revealed Him to John in baptism, who proclaimed Him to be the Beloved Son, who raised Him from the dead, so that He was declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit by His resurrection, and who on the day of Pentecost convinced men of His claims. Or the allusion may be to the fact

that it was not what Jesus Christ appeared to be "in the flesh," which every one could see, but what He was by the working of His Spirit, namely, His inner life, revealed through His teaching, and miracles, and influence, which caused Him to be recognised as the Son of God. For it is not what appeals to our natural observation, to our sensuous nature, or to our purely intellectual faculties, which awakens the conviction that He is our Lord, but it is His Divine touch, felt upon heart and conscience, which leads us, like Thomas, to fall at His feet and say, "My Lord and my God."

II. The second suggested Contrast is between the Angels and the Nations.—"He was seen of angels and preached unto the Gentiles." These are again natural opposites. Angels are the blessed inhabitants of a higher sphere; Gentiles are the more corrupt and debased inhabitants of this lower world. The former now see Jesus as He is; they observed His progress from the first; they heralded His birth; they ministered to Him in the wilderness; they proclaimed His resurrection; they welcomed Him to glory. Yet He, who was the angels' Lord, stooped so low as to be proclaimed to the Gentiles as their Saviour and their brother, able to raise even them to sit with Him in heavenly places.

And it is His glory that His claims have been admitted by opposing and divergent nationalities, by the most varied types of men, as rightful King of all the world. Vast as is the empire of Buddhism, victorious as has been the sword of Mohammedanism, the votaries of either of those two faiths are found almost exclusively among

peoples who have much in common; but the religion of Jesus Christ meets the needs of Eastern and of Western, of Jew and of Gentile, of Latin and Teuton, of degraded savages and educated Englishmen alike. Of Him it is said, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

III. THE LAST CONTRAST DRAWN HERE IS BETWEEN THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY.—"He was believed on in the world, received up into glory." What a contrast between the celestial brightness and purity in which he is enshrined, and the disease, the death, and the sin prevailing in the world. Revelations, startling in their horror, are now and again given of the depths of depravity which are close beside us in this so-called civilised and Christian land; glimpses are seen of obscenities and wickednesses like those which destroyed the Roman empire, and brought fire from heaven upon the cities of the plain. I know not how we Christians could still work hopefully if it were not that Jesus, the Almighty purifier, the one Saviour, can be believed on, and is believed on by us in the world—as One able and willing to bring salvation to the lost and degraded. Though He has ascended on high and been received into glory, He has not forgotten us, who, trusting in Him, are fighting against evils within and around. Keep up a brave heart, for the Lord is nigh; throw your whole energies into His cause, for the final victory is sure; make no terms with sin, for it crowned your Lord with thorns; grasp hands with all His servants, for we are one in

Him; trust absolutely to His aid for success, for without Him we are powerless.

"We would be one in hatred of all wrong,
One in our love of all things sweet and fair,
One with the joy that breaketh into song,
One with the grief that trembles into prayer,
One in the power that makes Thy children free,
To follow truth, and thus to follow Thee.

Oh clothe us with Thy heavenly armour, Lord,
Thy trusty shield, Thy sword of love divine.
Our inspiration be Thy constant word;
We ask no victories that are not Thine.
Give or withhold, let pain or pleasure be,
Enough to know that we are serving Thee."

SERMONETTES ON FOURTH CHAPTER.

I.

A GREAT HERESY.

(1 Tim. iv. 1–3.)

"The spirit" referred to in the first verse of this chapter is unquestionably the Holy Spirit of God, who had been promised to the Church as its abiding teacher and comforter. In all their agencies and appointments the apostles sought His direction. It sometimes came in outward events, sometimes in strong impulses, and sometimes in the distinct utterances of men who were recognised by their brethren as inspired prophets. Examples of these modes of communication will readily recur to the mind of any one who is familiar with the Acts of the Apostles. When Paul planned to go into Bithynia, "the Spirit suffered him not;" by which we understand that circumstances arose contrary to his wish and expectation, which made the intended visit impossible, and that this outward indication of the Divine will was accompanied by the conviction that God would have another course adopted. In the Church at Antioch, on an earlier occasion, some Christians during the assembly for prayer were led to speak under Divine impulse, in the name of God, saying, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work

whereunto I have called them." But in whatever mode the mandate came, implicit and unquestioning obedience was always rendered; and we may be sure that if we were as true to indications in Providence, and to inspired impulses, as those men were, the guidance of God's Spirit would be far more of a reality than it is. The trained ear of a musician can discover meanings and suggestions in a harmony which to an ordinary listener is nothing but a pleasant sound. And the conscience of one who habitually lives near God and listens for Him is sensitive to His whispers, and finds the meaning and value of the promise, "I will guide thee with Mine eye."

Among the functions of the Holy Spirit was the occasional revelation of coming events; for there were in this sense "prophets" in the Christian Church, as truly as there had been under the Jewish dispensation. Nor were these always prominent and well-known men. Ananias, who clearly foresaw what he had to do in Damascus, and what would be the issue of his action in the subsequent history of Saul of Tarsus, was comparatively an obscure disciple. And Agabus, who is spoken of as foretelling a famine which soon afterwards came, and as warning Paul very definitely of the bonds which awaited him in Jerusalem, was a man of whom nothing more is known. Glimpses of the future came to some whose one qualification was that they stood on heights of spiritual communion—just as from the summits of the Rigi we have seen flashes of distant scenes through the broken clouds, which would be utterly hidden from one standing on a lower level. It was probably through one of the unknown prophets of

the early Church that the distinct prophecy had been given to which Paul here alludes, which pointed out the speedy coming of a great heresy, the main outlines of which were definitely foreshadowed. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in later times some shall depart from the faith;" for there would arise a dark and subtle power, which would work with disastrous energy in the kingdom of Christ; and this would come about not in very distant days, but in seasons later than the apostle's own, though sufficiently near for the influence of a faithful minister like Timothy to exercise upon it salutary influence.

Let us look at this great heresy, which has often and in various forms repeated itself even down to our own day.

I. As to THE SOURCE OF THE HERESY Paul speaks in no wavering tones.

1. *He traces it through the human agents to demon power.*

The Scriptures affirm that this world is the scene of conflict between evil and good, and that outside the range of our senses is, on the one side, the Holy Spirit of the living God, and on the other side are principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of the world. The alternations of night and day, of storm and calm, are not more real than are the vicissitudes of this great contest going on in the hearts of men.

Allusion is made here to "seducing spirits;" but mysterious and mighty as may be their power, they are not omnipotent, nor are they resistless, but have control over those only who (to use Paul's phrase) "give heed"

to them. Whether we are tempted to false thoughts, or to impure acts, or to anything else that is evil, it is not in vain that the summons is heard, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The "doctrines of devils" are not facts about demons, known as demonology, but the phrase is equivalent to "teaching which emanates from demons," false and evil spirits, who are ever seeking to keep us in alienation from the life of God, and this is done when we are induced to "depart from the faith," to lose our hold of Christ, as the world's true teacher, as man's only Redeemer.

2. But while we must guard against the evil thoughts which sometimes, as we are conscious, do not arise from ourselves, we have to give heed to this warning against *the human agents* of wickedness, of whom the apostle says, "They speak lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

If there was one iniquity which more than another aroused the anger of our Lord, it was hypocrisy. A man who is false and unreal has no part in the kingdom of light, but is silently, if not openly, fighting against it. The Pharisees who opposed our Lord, and the false teachers who withstood His apostles, were alike in this sin; and a man who falsifies what he knows to be true, whether in the world or in the pulpit, is doing the work of the devil, for on Divine authority we know that the devil is a liar, and the father of lies.

And the evil man here described has his "conscience seared with a hot iron"—a phrase which blazes with the apostle's holy indignation, but expresses a tremendous

fact. Just as seared flesh has lost its sensibility, the once delicate nerves in it being destroyed, so there are consciences which nothing can affect. Appeals to honour and to shame are alike useless. The man can do most grievous wrongs without shrinking, indeed without definite consciousness of the evil in them; and even to the hour of his death he seems absolutely free from remorse. There are usurers who do not consider for an instant the misery they cause; profligates who are simply absorbed in the indulgence of passion, and have no conception that it will ultimately bring awful and resistless punishment. Corrupt to the core, their inmost nature is blurred and blasted by falsehood and sin; their conscience is "seared with a hot iron," and the good Spirit of God has said to all holy influences around, "They are joined to idols, let them alone."

The fatal influence exercised by such men was seen in the early Church, and is felt around us still, for no one can fail to be a power either for good or evil. Dr. Chalmers admirably puts it in these words: "Every man is a missionary now and for ever, for good or for evil, whether he intends or designs it or not. He may be a blot radiating his dark influence outward to the very circumference of society; or he may be a blessing, spreading benediction over the length and breadth of the world; but a blank he cannot be. There are no moral blanks; there are no neutral characters. We are either the sower that sows and corrupts, or the light that splendidly illuminates and the salt that silently operates; but, being dead or alive, every man speaks."

II. The Nature of the Heresy thus originated, and propagated, next demands notice.

After the strong language used by Paul about "doctrines of devils," we should have expected the mention here of some grosser evils than those which are specified; for, however foolish and mistaken these ascetic notions were, they do not seem to some of us to have been very harmful morally. And we are the more tempted to take this view under the influence of the modern opinion, which I believe to be radically false, that doctrine is of no consequence at all.

These teachers, whom Paul so strongly condemns, are described as "forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats." The Therapeutæ in Egypt, and the Essenes in South Palestine, had before this made a practice of abstaining from marriage and from the use of flesh and wine; and they maintained that the use of these, if not sinful, was at least inconsistent with the higher degrees of excellence in spiritual life. As the effect of Christianity was to give a tremendous impulse to all spiritual thought, it is no wonder that soon after the second century began the Gnostics not only maintained but exaggerated the practices of the Essenes. And the teaching of Roman Catholicism in praise of celibacy, and of vigil, fasting, and penance, a teaching diligently propagated by Ritualists in the English Episcopal Church, comes perilously near the heresy which Paul scathingly denounced, if indeed it is not identical with it.

Now Scripture does not deny that occasionally, and for purposes of moral discipline or for the accomplishment of

special Christian work, abstinence from ordinary human relationship and from the use of ordinary food, may be for our good. We can understand and appreciate the sacrifice of one who resolves on a celibate life that he may be more free for evangelistic service in some unwholesome climate, or of one who gives up wine, or even food, for the subjugation of appetite. The danger in our day is not towards unwholesome asceticism but towards unwholesome indulgence. Not fasting, but feasting, is the peril of the modern Church.

Why then did Paul speak so strongly as he does here against asceticism? Not so much, I think, because the practice was likely to minister to pride and self-sufficiency, nor because it was certain to develop into the follies of those who regarded dirt as a sign of grace and the laceration and torture of the flesh as a means of expiating sin, but because this teaching was the offspring of a fundamental error which threatened the very existence of the kingdom of Christ. That error, which appeared and reappeared like the fabled Phœnix, was this: that there was an evil creator as well as a good creator, and that while the flesh with all matter belonged to the evil one, only the spirit belonged to the latter. That was the philosophical reason given for neglecting the body, for eschewing all fleshly relations, and for abstaining from the material satisfaction of appetite; and against it the apostles protested with all their might, and no wonder. For if this were true, God was not the good creator of all things. If this were true, God had not come really in the flesh, seeing that flesh was the product of an alien

and hostile power. Hence many came to deny the true humanity of our Lord; they said His body was only a phantasm, not a reality, which implied that His temptations, His sufferings, His death and resurrection took place in appearance only. Paul was not "striving about words to no profit" when he struck out vigorously against this pernicious doctrine; and before you dismiss such language in the New Testament as exaggerated, try to see what really lay behind it. Even Satan may appear as an angel of light, especially when seen down the vista of eighteen centuries.

II.

OUR CHARTER OF FREEDOM.

(1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.)

In meeting the heresy which he foresaw, the apostle asserted one of the noblest principles in our heritage as Christians—"Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." In other words, a common meal may become a sacrament to us if it be rightly received; and to a true follower of Christ no relationship will prove more saintly than that between husband and wife; nothing more pure than fatherly and motherly love; nothing more promotive of spiritual life than the duties and responsibilities of sons and daughters to their parents. All things and all relationships may become holy to us. This was the teaching of Paul, and of his Lord and ours.

You see, then, that Paul wisely meets the error by stating the truth, which must conquer it. In presence of the gigantic fabric of falsehood, which had its foundation in philosophy, in Paganism, and even in Judaism, he was like some great general who stands face to face with a strong fortress in an enemy's country. Such a general

might adopt one of two courses. He might hurl his army against the strongly-built walls, and try to win the place by force. He might succeed at great cost, but only to be cast out in turn by the coming of a larger hostile army. Or he might erect another fortress stronger and higher, which would dominate the other, and make it untenable; and when the enemy was gone from it, his own citadel would still stand and hold all the country round. This is what Paul did.

I. The Explanation of this Principle.—The apostle maintained a truth, which being received will always save the Church from the old error, in whatever form it comes. He declared that everything was made by God, and that everything God made was good, and only became bad when it was used in a wrong spirit. Our Heavenly Father would have us take His gifts as constituting a holy eucharist, bringing blessing to us and evoking praise and thanks to Him. You would not wish your children to sit at the meal you had prepared, saying—"I am afraid this is poisonous," or "This is not meant for me;" and such a suspicious, fearful, graceless spirit is what God is grieved to see in us amid the relationships of life or in the use of His bounties. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving." A truth which condemns alike the ascetic in the Romish Church, and the Plymouth Brother, who thinks that business is worldly, social joys pernicious, and newspapers fatal to one's spiritual welfare. Be brave and be trustful in the use of all that God has given you.

It was characteristic of the religious faith of the

Hebrews that it maintained the doctrine, that all things were of God; that there was one Creator, all-wise and all-good. This struck at the root of the dualism of ancient religions, which attributed some things to the evil and some things to the good creator. It bade defiance to the gods of Olympus with their fabled jealousies and rivalries; and it made war upon the popular belief in inferior deities, who as fays and goblins so long survived in the imagination of Christendom. All things are of God, and every creature (*i.e.*, everything created) of God is good. This was the bold declaration of men inspired by the Holy Spirit; and our hearty acceptance of this will give us perennial joy, and will reconcile us to many things which vex us now.

II. The Application of this Principle.

1. *In its application to the natural world* it is doubtless generally believed amongst us. Flowers and fruits, and golden corn and waving trees, all originated in God's thought, and are the products of His laws.

> "Not a flower
> But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
> Of His unrivalled pencil. He inspires
> Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
> And bathes their eyes with nectar; and includes,
> In grains as countless as the seaside sands,
> The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.
> Happy who walks with Him! whom what he finds
> Of flavour, or of scent, in fruit or flower,
> Of what he views of beautiful or grand
> In nature, from the broad majestic oak
> To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
> Prompts with remembrance of a present God."

So Cowper sings, and to his words we all say, Amen.

But do not these words of Paul warrant us in going further? Is not the ever-living, ever-present God, who makes the flowers and rules the world, the ordainer of our lot, the appointer of our circumstances? And if this be so, does not belief in it give sacredness to earthly duties, and dignity to those which are most trivial?

2. *Make application of this truth to the occupations of life.* There are times when we feel as if we could do better work than falls to our share. In the depressed condition of commerce especially, well-educated men are forced to take up employment which leaves their best and most cultivated powers unused. Thousands who are capable of swaying the multitude by noble speech, are using their pens to win the barest livelihood; and many women with well-trained intellects and splendid capacity, sometimes ask themselves why they should have sunk down till they are little more than household drudges. Well, if this life be all; if it be only on earth that our faculties are to be exercised; if this be the place of reaping and not of sowing, the scene of reward and not of training; we should perhaps be justified in believing either that an evil destiny as well as a good God was at work, or else in complaining that the absolute and only Ruler of all things was not just and equal in His ways. But we believe that what He has ordained, as well as what He has created, will prove to be good and best in the long run; that drudgery is as divine as dignity; and that training for the hereafter is more valuable than triumph here.

Everything depends on how you receive and do your work. You may go to your office as a grumbling slave,

or you may go as Christ's happy servant. You may find in it a place of torment, where your temper will be fretted and your spirit lacerated by slights and by vexations and by injustices; or you may find in it a sphere of self-conquest, where you will win victory over yourself, and reveal the dignity and serenity of a citizen of heaven. You may look *into* your work till you wonder that you should be so humiliated as to have such a thing to do, or you may look *through* your work until you see the blessedness of service for the noblest Master. Make George Herbert's quaint and beautiful prayer your own:—

"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see;
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee!

"A man that looks on glass
On it may stay his eye;
Or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven espy.

"All may of Thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean
Which, with this tincture, *for Thy sake*,
Will not grow bright and clean.

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

"This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told."

No occupation (unless there be sin in it) is to be spurned, no creature of God is to be rejected, but we are to say with the apostle, "I know, and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, 'that there is nothing unclean of itself.'" Evil is not in the thing, but in the spirit which wrongly receives, or uses, the thing. As Jesus Himself taught, nothing from without can defile a man, but that which is from within does defile him, and all that he touches and does. The man with an unclean heart will see impurity in what is innocent; the man with a false heart will transform an act of religious worship into a sin; the man with a thankless, godless heart will use as a gratification of appetite what might be a holy sacrament.

III. The testing power of this Principle.—Nothing is to be rejected if it be received with thanksgiving. But that implies that you ought to reject what you cannot receive with thanksgiving to God. If there is something in using which remembrance of God would make you ashamed; or something which may lead you to excess or to evil desire, or to intoxication, or to any sin; or something about which you feel you cannot say, "O God, I thank Thee for this," then it is to be rejected; but if it be otherwise, use your liberty freely as the children of God. Prayer and thanksgiving to God may be to you what the legendary Eastern king found his formula to be, for when a cup of poison was put within his reach, and he took it into his hand, he named the name of God and made the sign of the cross over it, according to his constant custom, and the poisoned chalice was suddenly shattered in his hand, and all the poison was spilled. Name

God's name over everything doubtful, and no poison of sin shall hurt you. There is still a sense in which the promise of the Lord is true for all His disciples. "They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them."

IV. THE TWOFOLD REASON GIVEN FOR THIS PRINCIPLE.—In the 5th verse the apostle explains more fully how common things are made sacred. I say advisedly *made* sacred, for the word he uses means just that. It does not signify that the things are declared to be holy, but that they are actually made holy by the word of God and prayer.

1. Now the "*word of God*" is not the utterance of His name over food as a sort of talisman; for absurdities of the nature of transubstantiation have no foundation in the New Testament. The allusion is to "the word," or command of God, which expressly gave permission and authority to man to use whatever was suitable for him in the vegetable and in the animal kingdom—"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." That divine ordinance makes all things sacred for the use of man; but man's loyal and grateful acceptance of it must be combined with the ordinance, in order to make his use of things a right and not a usurpation. Hence the apostle says, everything is made sacred by the word of God—

2. *And Prayer*, and these which God has joined let no man put asunder. In the former phrase you see the top of the ladder which reaches heaven, in the latter you see the foot of it resting on the earth—and to a prayerless man it is only a vision of glory beyond his reach. God's

word to you bestows the gift, but your word to God must appropriate the gift, or else it is not sacred and divine.

No doubt what is here required of us is the *spirit* of thankfulness, but the expression of it should not be withheld; and it is to be feared that the growing disuse of the old custom of "grace before meat" is leading some children to forgetfulness of the Giver, though they are taught to repeat the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." That time-honoured, sacred custom should find place in all your homes; and while on the one hand you do not make it a long inappropriate prayer for spiritual blessing, on the other hand see that it is not treated as if it were a charm, or incantation, to be gabbled through without thought or meaning. Let us not forget or despise the Christian custom of thanksgiving, which even in the earliest days was general in its observance; indeed, we could not do better than adopt a grace which was used so early that it was known to Timothy's disciples, and with it we close:—

"Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast nourished me from my youth, who givest food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that we, always having all sufficiency, may abound unto every good work, in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom to Thee be glory, honour, and power for ever. Amen."

III.

COUNSELS TO GOD'S SERVANTS.

(1 Tim. iv. 6–10.)

The wise counsels given here to Timothy have their value in every age, and in every land, for those who are called upon to teach and warn their fellows. Foremost among these counsels (when thrown into a hortatory form) is this—

I. Make known the Truth, and the Truth will strengthen you.—"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be . . . nourished." The verb used by Paul does not signify, as our translation of it does, the reminding people of what they knew already, but had forgotten; it simply means that the doctrine unfolded in the previous verses was to be presented in a suitable way to the minds of others.

1. *It is to be noted that neither here nor elsewhere was Timothy called upon to be a dictator, but a teacher:* he was to give counsels rather than commands. Indeed this was the attitude assumed by the apostles themselves, who felt that dictatorial authority in matters of conscience was their Lord's alone.

Religious truth demands the willing assent of mind

and of conscience, and is valueless if it is imposed as a creed by force or fraud. Like the germ of life in a seed of corn it must be received into a kindly soil; for only when soil and seed work together is a harvest possible. You may build a wall or a house on any soil—clay, or rock, or chalk—delving away till a smooth surface is prepared to receive the bricks and mortar superimposed upon it, and the stability of your building will not be much affected by the nature of the ground. But it is not thus you can get a harvest. A harvest cannot be had on every soil, because it is the product of life, and life needs to be in contact with certain forces before it can multiply itself. So in the higher sphere. You can make a child learn a creed and repeat it without fault, but that mental structure is only like the dead work of the builder. Truth needs to be welcomed by love, and thought, and will, as the seed must be received into good soil, and then the increase comes. Hence it is that the responsibility of each as to the reception or the rejection of Christian truth is personal; and the lesson for us teachers is important—that we should present the truth affectionately, clearly, and prayerfully, but we must throw the onus of dealing with it upon each hearer. "Nor for that we have dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy." This should be the motto of every Christian teacher.

2. *Observe also the reflex action of such teaching.* If you put others in mind of these things you will yourself be "nourished." This is but throwing into another form the familiar truths, "There is that scattereth, and yet

increaseth;" "Give and it shall be given you;" "To him that hath" (who so possesses as to use to the utmost) "to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance." How true this is, especially in mental and spiritual experience. We give our sympathy, without stint, to some one in trouble, and our tenderness of feeling is thereby intensified. We use what little knowledge we have of God's Word, or of Christian experience, and our knowledge grows. The disciples were taught this in a concrete form when they were asked to give up to others the few loaves and fishes which were insufficient even for themselves; and not only was the multitude fully satisfied, but the givers took up for themselves of fragments left over twelve basketsfull. Never stint others, for fear of impoverishing yourself, and "thou shalt be a good servant of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now."

II. Reject the False and Trivial for the True and Real.

1. *Timothy is warned against "profane and old wives' fables,"* or in modern parlance, against stories which are the veriest chatter of old women. Probably Paul alludes to the fables and endless genealogies of which he elsewhere speaks. Every one who knows anything about the later Jewish writings can recall instances of these rambling and unprofitable enlargements of Scripture teaching, which were obnoxious to a man of sterling common sense and spiritual intelligence, such as Paul. Foolish and trivial discussions and fanciful theories have often been allowed to overlay the truth of God, to its complete

hiding, or at least to its sad enfeeblement. They are like a heap of decaying refuse covering the verdant grass, whose pale and enfeebled shoots show what its effect has been even after it has been cleared away. Let the truth about sin, and about Christ the Saviour from sin, be kept in the light; and beware lest it be covered over and forgotten under oratorical prettinesses, or philosophical speculations.

2. *The man of God has something better to do than to amuse his imagination or the imagination of others, and must "exercise himself rather unto godliness."* God does not ask us to give up pleasures or even follies for the mere sake of cultivating an ascetic temper, but in order that we may be the more free for higher pursuits and a nobler service, knowing that those who would attain unto godliness must "exercise" themselves thereunto. To spend the week in thoughtlessness and triviality, and then to sit with inert mind under the preaching of the truth on Sunday, with an occasional spasm of repentance, or a feeble attempt at the repetition of a prayer, is only to mock God with unreality. As the Greek athlete would "exercise" himself, and spend his time in learning and in practising privately what would be of use in the arena, so the Christian is to apply his mind to reading and to prayer, to self-conquest, and to service for others, and thus to exercise himself unto godliness. And the word Paul uses, drawn as it is from the athlete's training, is suggestive of something further. The veriest tyro, even in the modern gymnasium, knows that he must often attempt to do what he thinks he cannot do,

and rise from a failure or a fall to try the jump or the climb once more. Let it be so with those who exercise themselves unto godliness. You think you cannot teach, that you cannot pray; but "exercise thyself" unto it, and with God's blessing the stammering tongue shall speak and the fluttering heart be ruled.

III. KEEP THE BODY IN ITS TRUE PLACE AS SUBORDINATE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.—The Revised Version is to be preferred to the Authorised in its rendering of the eighth verse, "bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things." The apostle's reference is not to the asceticism which by flagellations and vigils kept the body under, but to the gymnastic exercises of the athlete, of which he had been reminded by the verb used in the preceding verse. He was one who would heartily approve of such exercise as would develop and maintain physical vigour, which is essential to the right and cheerful doing of most work. "Bodily exercise is profitable for a little," although, in comparison with spiritual exercise, it is not so far-reaching in its result. The Greek gained a measure of good, a certain amount of profit within a limited sphere, for his agility and healthiness were promoted; but Christians had other results to look for besides and beyond keeping in sound condition the body, which for a time they dwelt in.

Now, this teaching has its value for us in the present day. Games and sports which call for physical exercise or for physical restraint are profitable. The young lad at school, or the clerk in an office, or the

student at the university is largely benefited by the cricket-field and the boating club; for not only is every physical power God-given and sacred, and therefore to be developed, but athletic training demands abstinence from late hours, from intoxicating liquors, and from excess of any kind. Many who have gone out to the mission-field have found their training in the cricket-field a help and not a hindrance. But though bodily exercise is profitable, and each of us should try to have the "*mens sanis in corpore sano*," it is only profitable for a little when compared with what is within our reach if we exercise ourselves "unto godliness," for the body will soon perish, but the soul will live for ever; the physical strength will soon pass away, but the powers of loving and serving, won through prayer, will fit us for serving among the angels.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." Yes, even our present life is made deeper, richer, and holier through knowing and loving our God. Its bitterness is sweetened, its disappointments are made bearable, its pleasures are made sacred, and in itself it appears to us only as the germ of that which is to come.

"O Breather into men of breath,
O Holder of the keys of death,
O Giver of the life within,
Save us from death, the death of sin;
That body, soul and spirit, be
For ever living unto Thee."

IV. LET HOPE IN THE LIVING GOD BE YOUR INSPIRATION IN LABOUR AND SUFFERING.—"For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."

This verse explains what Paul meant by living a life of godliness. "Life" is not mere existence, however prolonged, nor mere enjoyment of existence; but existence used for others, in the strength and under the blessing of God. The true saint "labours and suffers reproach"—or rather, "toils and strives"—in the service of his God; and he is not troubled when ill-requited, nor disheartened by seeming failure, because he trusts in the living God, in whom he has an endless heritage of peaceful and most blessed life. For "He is the Saviour of all men." By His watchful and beneficent Providence He is constantly preserving them, and continuing to them the use of the life that now is; and if in a yet higher sense He is not their "Saviour," it is not from lack of power, or of will, to save, but because they refuse His offers until He cries, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." And if He does so much for sinful men, what will He not do for those who have trusted in His Word and cast themselves on His mercy?

Work and strive, then, in His service, as one who believes in His readiness to give all that pertains to life and to godliness; and speak and plead with others as one who believes that in His love, in the Saviour's atonement, in the heaven He has prepared, salvation is proffered to all.

"Let all men know that all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above;
That doubt and trouble, fear and pain,
And anguish, all are shadows vain;
That death itself shall not remain."

IV.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER.

(1 Tim. iv. 11–16.)

With true affection, and with heavenly wisdom, Paul exhorts his son in the faith to be mindful of his conduct and character. What was expected of Timothy may be fairly demanded of us, who, in the tone and tendency of the social life around us, possess incalculably greater advantages than he. And what is required of every Christian, even the lowliest, ought most of all to characterise those who are the teachers of others, in the class, in the Church, and in the home. It is through them, through their words and characters, that the truth is to be made known, and in respect of all that we have learnt of God and of His ways, the exhortation comes to each, "These things command and teach." There are truths which warrant not only clear enunciation, but also bold enforcement, because they are not of man but of God, and we are His channels of communication with the world. Warnings against sin, rebukes of cynical scepticism, denunciations of vice in its multitudinous forms, calls to repentance, invitations to the Saviour as our only

hope, all these should be uttered with no wavering sound. In your homes, when the children are about you; in the class, towards which your responsibility is so tremendous; through the press, whose influence is wider than ever; obey the mandate, "These things command and teach." But words from a teacher without character are like bullets without powder, and will fall as harmlessly, dropping far short of their mark.

Here, as well as elsewhere, the apostle exhorts to—

I. The Maintenance of Moral Dignity. — Timothy was at this time in the full vigour of his manhood, although he was young for the responsibilities which rested upon him in Ephesus; and the solemn charge just given him would make him more than ever painfully conscious of his youth and inexperience. He had to rebuke those who were older than himself, in days when age received more honour than unfortunately it does now; and the false teachers, who made it difficult even for Paul—older in years and higher in dignity than Timothy—to maintain his authority, would take every possible advantage of the inexperience of this young evangelist, regarding him as an upstart, and refusing to submit to his authority.

1. *The tendency of Timothy was to yield rather than to command, to sacrifice truth for the sake of peace, and to lessen his own authority by morbid self-depreciation.* Probably this is not so common amongst us as self-confidence; but it is a serious fault, and may be a grievous hindrance to usefulness. Unless you believe yourself to be capable of doing something better than you are now doing you will hesitate to attempt it. If you cannot trust

God to help you through an onerous duty you will be in danger of evading it. Much noble service has been lost to the Church and to the world by a foolish self-depreciation. I remember one who became a very successful man telling me that his early youth was blighted by this morbid tendency, and that he owed all his prosperity to a wise-hearted, loving, motherly woman, who took pity on the sensitive, shrinking lad, and made him believe in himself, as one gifted by God to do something in the world. While guarding yourself against conceit and vanity, do not fall into the error of self-depreciation. "Let no man despise thy youth." Be manly, and brave, and firm, lest you sacrifice interests which God has intrusted to your charge.

2. *But the way to overcome the disadvantage of youth in the opinion of others, and to gain influence over them, is clearly suggested here.* It is not to be done by noisy self-assertion, by the evident desire to be prominent, but by becoming, through Divine grace, an exemplar of real Christian worth. Whether this appears among the brothers and sisters at home, or among godless companions in the office, or among those associated in religious worship and work, it always tells, winning for its possessor love and esteem, and endowing him with an influence which sometimes amazes himself. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation (or behaviour), in charity, in faith, in purity." (The phrase "in spirit" is properly omitted from the Revised Version.)

(1.) *It is through our "word"* that we chiefly manifest to others the nature of our inner life, and the tone and temper thus exhibited either weakens or strengthens our

influence for good. (2.) *But words must be in harmony with conduct,* and he would be a poor maintainer of Christ's cause whose words were admirable while his general behaviour was frivolous or faulty. (3.) Nor is it enough to watch over our words and behaviour, but we must pay regard to motive and impulse, because we have to do with and to bear witness for the great Searcher of hearts, and should see that *love* and *faith* are the twin motive powers of our life—*love* which really cares for the interests of others, *faith* which lays hold upon the strength and wisdom of an unseen yet ever present God. (4.) And added to all these must be unquestioned *purity*, which will make us so scrupulous about moral improprieties that the breath of slander will fade away instantly from the polished shield of our reputation, and will keep the inner life clear and chaste, while it gives us the fulfilment of the Lord's words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

II. AGAIN—PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIAN WORK is inculcated here as well as maintenance of moral dignity. The apostle appears to have expected an early return to Ephesus, and hence writes—

1. "*Till I come give attention to the reading, to the exhortation, to the teaching.*" The reference is primarily to the public duties of the Christian teacher. The "*reading*" of Holy Scripture in religious assemblies, which had been transferred from the synagogue, formed no inconsiderable part of the public worship of those days, as any one can imagine who reflects on the cost and rarity of manuscripts. "*Exhortation*" was often heard—appeals

to affection and to enthusiasm, which led many a believer to give himself up entirely to the service of the Lord. And coincident with this was steady consecutive "*teaching*," by means of which God's Word was expounded, applied, and illustrated. The helps which may fit us to do this are now innumerable; and he is without excuse who, for want of due preparation, puts silly stories in the place of practical exposition, or lets off rhetorical fireworks when the world wants the steady light of Christian truth.

2. *But the work to which Timothy was called required in the first place "a gift,"* which the apostle says was given him instrumentally—"by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The word used for "gift" denotes that it came from the Holy Spirit, with whom it is always associated in Paul's writings. Even from his youth Timothy had been destined to peculiar evangelistic work, and God gave him grace proportioned to this calling. "Prophets" in the Church had proclaimed this, and it was from their lips that the young evangelist had the assurance of his gift and calling; and this had been confirmed by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," by which rite he had been set apart for his special work. The prophetic voice had been God's call to his responsive soul, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery had denoted the concurrence of the Church, who sent him forth in their name and with their prayers. The gift bestowed was not the gift of miracles, for that was never given except through the apostles, and they had no power to intrust the function to others. Hence "the seven," who were themselves endued with super-

natural power, could not convey it to others; but when Philip would gladly have so enriched his converts, he could only ask for Peter and John to do so. But the presbytery, consisting of humble and obscure pastors, could set apart for service those whom God endued and called; indeed Paul and Barnabas were sent forth by unknown men to the work to which God had called them. These two—the gift of God and the recognition of it by the Church—should ever be combined in the pastor who is working for Christ.

3. *But he is foolish and sinful who relies on the possession of a gift, or the recognition of it by others.* Neglected, the gift will perish, and the life of promise will end in miserable failure. Therefore, in the acquirement of knowledge and in the impartation of it, "neglect not the gift that is in thee." But "be diligent in these things—give thyself wholly to them, that thy progress may be manifest unto all." The phrase rendered "give thyself wholly to them," might be more literally translated "be in them"—have your life in such thoughts and truths; let them constitute the atmosphere you breathe, and then your religious work will not be a something artificial and foreign to your nature, but the necessary outcome of your inward life.

4. *Give heed, then, unto thyself and unto the doctrine.* Cultivate such gifts as you have, and use them without stint in your Master's service; and see to it that the teaching you give is not the chance utterance of a thoughtless mind, but the product of earnest thinking, and of believing prayer. Thus only will you "continue in

them." For without the renewal of strength which comes from waiting upon God, however rich and vigorous your mind may be, your work will prove but a spasm ending in rigidity and death.

III. Finally, Paul looked to see in Timothy (and God looks to see in us) READINESS FOR THE PROMISED REWARD.

1. *It is no small blessing which is promised in the* 15*th verse, "that thy profiting" (or rather thy progress) "may appear unto all."* Not only will you be conscious of growth in knowledge and experience, by the faithful use of what is already yours, but those around you will rejoice over it too, both those who love you, and all who meet you in the walks of life. You shall be a living epistle, known and read of all men.

2. *Nay, more than this, "Thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."* No joy in heaven will be greater than this, that you will meet there those who were first helped to see their sin, and to come to the Saviour's feet by your words. And nothing is more likely to aid you in your own progress heavenward than the desire and effort to help others thither. Great as is the temptation to become perfunctory and professional in the service of Christ, yet, on the other hand, the helpfulness of such work to our own spiritual life is marvellous, for it brings us near to God, and near to our fellows, and makes us more like in spirit to Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. A traveller who was sinking from exhaustion in a snowstorm on the mountain saw his companion suddenly drop

helpless at his side; straightway his own peril was forgotten, and, flinging himself beside him, he chafed his hands and rubbed his chest; and by the effort which brought life back to the dying he kept himself alive —he saved both himself and the friend beside him. For your own sake, and for the sake of others, spend and be spent in this glorious service, and not only will your own life be the fuller here, but heaven itself will be made incomparably more full of joy.

I charge you in the name of the Saviour, who died for all; by the love you feel towards those around you, and by your hopes of welcome and reward in the land of the leal, be not content to be saved alone, lest by indolence and selfishness even your own salvation be risked.

SERMONETTES ON FIFTH CHAPTER.

I.

CHRISTIAN REPROOFS.

(1 Tim. v. 1, 2.)

I. The Necessity and the Nature of Christian Reproof are both suggested in the first verse of this chapter. Though age was always to be reverenced, even those in advanced life were to be rebuked when their conduct was inconsistent with their Christian profession. A jealous regard for the reputation of fellow-members would necessitate this; for the spirit of the Gospel is exactly the converse of the spirit of Cain, who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" If, therefore, we see a Christian friend pursuing a course which is likely to injure the Church; or if in his daily conduct there appears some fault hardly suspected by himself; or if there be in him, or in his manner, something that may lead to the loss of his reputation; by our love to him, as well as by our zeal for Christ, we are bound to speak.

This requires not only a sincere regard for our brother's welfare, but also at times considerable moral courage. Some find it by no means easy to point out faults even to their own children; but they fairly tremble at the idea of being faithful to those who are

in a better social position than themselves, or to those whose age, experience, or learning give them in other departments of life influence and authority. Hence not only kings, but many others in high position, are in danger, because few dare speak to them of sins or of follies which would be plainly condemned if they were poorer; and, therefore, they require more than others to examine themselves with all fidelity and earnestness. And we must evermore pray for grace that in these matters we may be faithful to each other, and that, instead of cherishing angry feelings, or whispering cowardly words of slander, we may obey the Lord's command—"Go and tell thy brother his fault between thee and him alone."

All who have sought to do this are conscious of its difficulty. Speak as you may, you will not improbably offend; for your brother needs as much grace to listen as you need to speak. Yet if your spirit be right; if your motive be really good; if you honestly desire to help him or to serve the Church, and not to relieve your own ill-temper, you may win him to a true brotherliness and to an ever-growing mutual esteem. Speak not unseasonably, at times when your words are likely to irritate more, but use the opportunities which are given of God.

> "Reprove not in their wrath incensed men,
> Good counsel comes clean out of season then;
> But when his fury is appeased and past,
> He will conceive his fault and mend at last.
> When he is cool and calm, then utter it—
> No man gives physic in the midst o' th' fit."

II. The Mode and Spirit in which Christian Reproof should be given in specified cases is suggested by the apostle here:—"Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters; with all purity."

The word translated "rebuke" means to reprimand sharply, to chide in a rough or arrogant manner, or in a domineering temper; and this is condemned by all the teaching of our Lord about humility and charity. For there is no doubt that while many hesitate to be faithful, others delight in fault-finding. In everything and in everybody they see what may be condemned and shut their eyes to what may be commended. Unhappy souls, whose views of life are distorted and discoloured by the spectacles they wear! In pointing out faults, we are to be reverent and cautious, as well as earnest and manly; and in discharging this duty of the Christian life we are called upon in the first place to be—

1. *Reverent towards age.* It is unfortunate that the Revised Version has confirmed the erroneous interpretation often put upon Paul's words, as translated in the Authorised Version. "Rebuke not an *elder*" should be, "Rebuke not an elderly person." The reference is not to any sort of Church official, nor is the suggestion made that such can do no wrong, or that if they do they are to be left unrebuked. Imperfections are common enough amongst leaders of the Churches, and do more harm in proportion to the dignity of the offender. The apostle makes no reference here to official standing, but to age. This is obvious,

from the fact that he speaks first of older and younger men, and then of older and younger women. The want of reverence for age and experience was never more common than now, and even in the highest council of the nation has sometimes received shameful exemplification and encouragement. Ours should be the spirit of Samuel, who, even when he had to convey a message from God, modestly hesitated, waiting for a good opportunity to deliver it, and then spoke with the reverence due to Eli's age. Do not sharply rebuke one older than yourself, but exhort him as a son might exhort the father whom he loves. This is Paul's message to us on that subject. But besides reverence to the aged—

2. *Love towards the brethren* should be conspicuous in every word of reproof. Not anger, nor hatred, nor suspicion, but love—for they are our brothers in Christ. And with this must be combined—

3. *Purity towards women*, in thought, as well as in word and act. Nowhere was the exhortation more necessary than in Ephesus, and no one needed it more than Timothy, whose interviews with them were of necessity frequent. But it should be the chief ambition of *every* right-hearted young man, to maintain a chivalrous tone in all conversation with women, and concerning them; and to put down with a strong firm hand not only all that may savour of impurity, but all that may tend to lower that lofty ideal of womanhood, which God seeks to create in the heart of every child, through the love of mother and of sister; and desires to keep there, as in a holy shrine, intact and unstained for evermore.

II.

HOME RESPONSIBILITIES.

(1 Tim. v. 4, 8, 16.)

In dealing with the important subject of the charity of the Church, Paul refers thrice in this passage (in the 4th, 8th, and 16th verses) to the claims of kinship. It is in harmony with Scripture throughout, that he estimates these claims far higher than ecclesiasticism has done. There seems to have been a notion in the Church, which has appeared and reappeared in different ages with varying force, that in proportion as the family is ignored, the Church will become paramount in the thought of Christians. Hence the praise of virginity, the practice of celibacy among the clergy, and so forth. But this is utterly opposed to the Divinely-given instinct of man; and is rebuked and condemned by none more strongly than by our Lord and His apostles. Home is the pivot on which humanity turns; and the Church, instead of being its antagonist, or its substitute, is simply its enlargement, and is of value to the world in proportion as it is homelike.

We are reminded here—

I. That home responsibilities are to be accepted

AS THE APPOINTMENT OF GOD.—The sacredness of family relationship is constantly insisted upon both in the Old Testament and the New. All transgressions against it were severely punished under the Mosaic economy, and were condemned still more solemnly by our Lord. And the filial duties referred to here, as acts of requital which common gratitude and natural affection would dictate, are always spoken of as they are in the fourth verse as being "acceptable to God." Amid the thunders of Sinai, and on the tables of stone, this was proclaimed, as one of God's first commandments, "Honour thy father and thy mother." And when the everlasting Word was incarnate, when the Great Teacher stood amongst men, of whom a voice from heaven said, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear Him," this command was emphatically reiterated, and all that tended to make it of no effect was swept aside and condemned. We cannot fail to remember the stern words in which our Lord rebuked the teaching of the priests upon that subject. In the spirit of ecclesiasticism, which is not yet dead, they urged that the Temple ought to stand before the home, and that parents might be left to starve, if only property was devoted to pious uses. Covetous men were ready enough to take advantage of this doctrine, and often cheated the priests while they robbed their parents. They only uttered as a sort of mystic incantation the word "Corban" over their property, and then would say to their needy parents, "But it is devoted to God, so that I cannot give it to you;" and, according to Pharisaic doctrine, they were free from

filial responsibility. Sternly did our Lord condemn those who thus made void the Word of God by their tradition. It is exactly in harmony with this teaching of Jesus Christ that the apostle says of professedly Christian sons and daughters, "Let them *first* learn to show piety at home"—for this is their prime duty, and nothing else can take its place; and by whomsoever rendered it is "acceptable to God."

A word of exposition on the first clause in the fourth verse is desirable, "If any widows have children or nephews, let them (*i.e.*, not the widows, but the children or nephews) learn first to show piety (filial love) at home." The word *nephews* is used by our translators in its old English sense, and is rendered in the Revised Version by its nearest modern equivalent, "grandchildren," for in the writings of Chaucer, Sir Thomas More, and John Locke, "nephews" is used to denote grandchildren. And similarly, when it is said they are to requite their "*parents*," more is included than fathers or mothers, for the apostle's word is equivalent to the Scotch "forbears," for which the English language has no exact synonym. The idea is that we owe a debt of gratitude to those from whom we have derived existence, and to whom we owe the support, care, and education we have received. We are bound to see that to the utmost of our ability their wants in old age are met.

II. That among our God-given responsibilities is the duty of labouring for the support of the weak. —Among the blessings of our human relationships is this: that honest work is necessitated. We have seen instances

in which a young fellow who has spent all his salary on cigars, dress, and amusements, has after his marriage buckled to work, and displayed an energy and ability for which none had given him credit before. Many a brave young wife and self-sacrificing mother has been ennobled through her home duties, having completely abandoned the foolish and trivial pursuits to which she was once addicted. And what numberless instances there are of men, whose diligence and self-abnegation are beyond praise, who have become what they are by first feeling the responsibility of caring and working for a widowed mother! Even till the hour when death comes to close the eyes which have always looked on you with love, you will surely see to it that she shall lack nothing which you can give. Time is but short, and our fast fleeting opportunities call for deeds of kindness and for words of love. Well has Bishop Heber said, "When the veil of death has been drawn between us and the objects of our regard, how quick-sighted do we become to their merits, and how bitterly do we remember words, or even looks of unkindness, which may have escaped in our intercourse with them! How careful should such thoughts render us in the fulfilment of those offices of affection which may yet be in our power to perform; for who can tell how soon the moment may arrive when repentance cannot be followed by reparation."

III. Paul emphatically declares that THOSE WHO FAIL IN THESE RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE DENIED THE FAITH AND ARE WORSE THAN INFIDELS.

Stern as the words are, they are true! Even the

heathen, certainly the better class of them, were wont to acknowledge filial duties, and would have condemned cynical disregard of parents and refusal to fulfil natural duties towards them. This is an offence against humanity, and therefore, in the deepest sense, an offence against Christ. But a Christian professes to have higher motives in duty than others. He declares that he does what is right in order to please his Lord and Master; he announces that he is a follower of One who pleased not Himself; who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and even to give His life as a ransom for many. For him to fail in this primal duty is to add hypocrisy to the crime; and if he provides not for his own to the utmost of his ability—be they little children intrusted to his care, or weakly brothers and sisters unable to fend for themselves, or aged parents whose work is done, and who look for a little recompense for their former self-denial—then he hath denied the faith he professes, and is worse than an unbeliever.

Let us never forget that the test of character is to be found in family relationships rather than in those which are ecclesiastical; and that it is in the home first and chiefest of all that Christ's disciples are to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

III.

CHARITY RULED BY WISDOM.

(1 Tim. v. 3–16.)

A very important subject is dealt with in this passage, namely, the principle upon which charity should be bestowed; and as on most other subjects, so on this, the world and the Church have much to learn from the inspired apostle.

In Jerusalem, the first Christians, in an outburst of generosity, were indiscriminate and lavish in their gifts; and although their conduct is sometimes regarded as an example of what ought always to be, we are inclined to question that dictum; to affirm that such virtual communism was nowhere suggested to other Churches, but was rather condemned by the apostles; and further, that the effects upon the Church in Jerusalem were not good, but bad, one of these being the extreme poverty from which that community afterwards suffered, which continually called for help, and received it through Paul's collection from the Churches in Philippi and Corinth, in Galatia and Antioch.

One phase of this great question, and a most important one, is dealt with here, namely, the relief of widows by

the charity of the Church. Probably widowhood was more common in those Eastern Churches than amongst us, and this accounts for the prominence given to the wants of widows in the New Testament. The polygamous practices which Oriental custom maintained in spite of the statutes of Roman law against them, would often cast a whole harem on the charity of friends at the death of one man. Hardships and wars would no doubt be answerable for greater mortality among men than women. And besides this, those who were desolate and friendless, as widows were, would be among the most eager to hear a gospel of love, and sacrifice, and sympathy, and would be the most prepared and likely to welcome it. For these, and for other reasons, there were many widows in the early Eastern Churches; and while Paul urged strongly that they should be supported wherever possible by their own relations, and not allowed to become a burden on the community, no one recognised more readily than he did that all who were not thus supported should find aid and sympathy in the Church. It is of these he is writing here, when he says, "Honour widows" (the main idea of the word "honour" in this verse, and in the 17th verse, being the giving of adequate support) "Honour widows that are widows indeed"—those, namely, who are in a truly widowed and forlorn condition, and whose behaviour is consonant with their circumstances.

Here and there the meaning of the apostle is a little obscure to us, owing to our comparative ignorance of the social customs of his day, but the main principles of his counsel are clear enough, and are of the utmost

value. They may be briefly expressed in this sentence of Southey's, "That charity is bad which takes from independence its proper pride, and from mendicity its salutary shame."

The first of these main principles of Church charity is—

I. THAT THOSE RECEIVED TO PERMANENT SUPPORT SHOULD BE ONLY SUCH AS ARE AGED OR WEAK. — In the ninth verse we read, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old;" or (as the R. V. more correctly has it) "Let none be enrolled as a widow under threescore years old." The allusion is to some list or register of widows kept by the Church; and the only question is what list is referred to? Was it a list of women who had been admitted to some kind of official position and service? or of those formally recognised as entitled to oversight and support? As Paul is speaking of something given to them, and not of service done by them, we prefer the latter interpretation, and regard the whole passage as a wise endeavour to prevent abuse of the Church's benefactions. If this community at Ephesus was going to follow the example of the Church at Jerusalem, and give daily ministration to all widows, it would tend, in the apostle's judgment, to encourage indolence and extortion. Therefore he would have a list kept and carefully revised of those who were to be permanent beneficiaries; and although others not on the list might of course receive occasional and even large relief, only the desolate and infirm were to rely on charity for a con-

stant livelihood. A woman over sixty in Asia Minor (though it would be otherwise in our healthier, cooler climate) could no longer work, nor do much for the Church either, except by her prayers and supplications (another proof that officials are not referred to). Widows thus infirm and aged were to receive constant and generous support. But nothing was to be done, even under the sacred name of charity, which would paralyse personal exertion or weaken the sense of responsibility in relatives and friends.

Paul's second principle is this—

II. That those whose character is Christian have special claims on the support of the Church.—He is not referring here to the relief of distress which is the duty of every Christian, but to the use of the charitable funds given by the Church for distribution among her members.

In vivid contrast with those holy women who deserved support is one described in the sixth verse: "She who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." The apostle's idea of life did not consist in what one had, but in what one was, and a life which depended upon and consisted in what belonged to this world, was to him nothing better than a living death. The very opposite idea is expressed by the heathen, Sophocles, for in his Antigone he says, "When a man abandons pleasure I do not reckon that such an one lives; but I consider him a living corpse." But Paul says, "Live in pleasure, without care of the infinite beyond, and you are dead while you live!"

How beautiful is the picture of the true Christian

matron, as depicted by the few touches of this master-hand in verses 5 and 10. Think of *her motherliness*, one who has brought up her children aright; perhaps not with the results she fondly hoped for, but with fidelity, earnestness, and prayer, which God will surely recompense. Or perhaps Paul alludes to one who, not having children of her own, has nevertheless the mother-heart for other people's children—protecting the endangered, rescuing the lost, and shedding sunshine over the pathway of them all. Very beautiful, too, are the thoughts suggested of *her lowly, loving ministry*. Entertaining strangers, for the Lord's sake; not necessarily because she was rich, but because she was kind. Washing the saints' feet, an Oriental mode of entertainment which had become very sacred to Christians since the Lord's act of loving condescension in the upper room, when He said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet." In other words, "Account nothing unworthy of you, but stoop to what is lowliest, and do it lovingly as to your Lord, diligently following every good work." And the secret of the life thus described is given in the fifth verse—such an one "trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." Happy is the man who has such a praying mother, and happy is the home where such a priestess dwells, lifting up holy hands! Thank God for the quiet, effectual prayers of Christian women, whose voices may not be heard in the Church, though they move the heart of Omnipotence. "Pray without ceasing."

III. The last principle which should guide us in the

selection of those who may live on the charity of the Church is this, THAT THEY SHOULD BE REJECTED WHO WOULD BE MORALLY INJURED BY DEPENDING ON IT.

At first sight the apostle seems rather hard upon the younger women; although it is evident from the 15th verse that he was not speaking from theory, but from actual and painful experience, and that some in the Church at Ephesus had already fallen into the evils to which he refers, having lost their first simple faith in Jesus Christ, and their former consecration to Him. He implies that ecclesiastical arrangements had aggravated their temptations, and he strongly urges that younger widows who might properly receive special help and solace for a time, ought not to be put on the roll of the Church for perpetual relief. His reason is given plainly enough. "They learn to be idle," says he, "wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." Surely we can see the wisdom of Paul's counsel. Right as it was to support the aged and infirm, it would be morally injurious to support by charity these younger women. Idleness is always a fruitful parent of sins, of which gossip, meddlesomeness, and unprofitable talk are not the greatest; and the best preventive of this would be to throw Christian women as far as possible on their own resources, to let them take a good opportunity for settling in life, to exert themselves for their own maintenance, or to care for another household, as the brave and patient servants of Jesus Christ. Any one who knows the pernicious effects produced by ill-regulated

charity, any one who reflects on the vices common to the idle classes of society, any one who has noticed the moral deterioration of young people who have nothing to do but to while away their time, will thank God for these wise counsels.

Let us not fail to take these lessons home to ourselves, applying them faithfully and wisely to our differing circumstances. Abjure idleness, and for your own sakes throw yourselves with all your heart into some service for others, which will exact your thought and occupy your time. Accept cheerfully and thankfully your home duties. Do not despise them because they are menial, nor cease to pray over them because they are earthly, but remember that husband and wife, parents and children, mistresses and servants, may all within the sphere of family life, glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are His. And in your own hours of loneliness and grief, let your hope be in the living God, whose heart is more loving, and whose help is more constant, than are the heart and help of those who love you best. To Him be glory and praise for ever.

IV.

DUTIES TOWARDS THE MINISTRY.

(1 Tim. v. 17–22.)

The duties which Timothy owed to the ministry of the Church are delineated in this passage, and they are incumbent on all Christians. True ministers of the Word may not claim exclusive prerogatives as if they were endued with official sanctity and priestly functions which no one else shares; but they ought to be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, and for their Master's sake, if in any degree the utterance of their Lord is true, "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me." The days when an official assumption of dignity was reverently recognised among us have passed away, probably never to return; but the power of character was never more cordially recognised than now, and a right-hearted brotherly Christian pastor has not often to complain of lack of love and esteem among his people. But it will always be beneficial to consider fairly these words of the great apostle upon the subject.

The first duty he mentions as owing to the Christian ministry is that—

I. Its faithfulness should be honoured.—"Let

the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." There seems very little reason to doubt that the functions of a presbyter were not the same in all Churches, and they certainly changed in the course of the Church's development. The duty of ruling, that is of presiding over and arranging for the services of the Church, was naturally assigned to some of the more experienced and judicious Christians; but the gift of preaching (in the modern sense of the term) to the edification of the people was not indispensable to this. A man might be a keen discerner of character, an admirable organiser, rich in knowledge and experience of Christian truth, and able to talk wisely and lovingly to the tempted or to the anxious without being a God-given exhorter or preacher. So long as apostles and itinerant evangelists were journeying from place to place, and the special gift of tongues which was then given to the Church remained, this absence of preaching power on the part of the elders would be of comparatively little importance. But when peculiar spiritual gifts began to be withdrawn, and visits from apostles and evangelists became less frequent, and churches became larger and more numerous; recognised and regular teaching was more requisite, and it would primarily be looked for from the elders. Hence those of them who possessed the gift of teaching naturally acquired more prominence than the others, and such men, in order to meet the demands of the Church, would often have to sacrifice a trade or profession, and give their time wholly to its service. This brief explanation will help us to under-

stand Paul's counsel, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially them who labour in the Word and teaching."

It has been often and rightly pointed out, that the primary reference of Paul here is to the support which should be given by the Church to those who devote to it the time and thought which would otherwise be spent in earning a livelihood in other ways. "Honour" means "consideration," in what is now the legal sense of the word. But it is hardly necessary to explain that the words are not to be literally taken, as if a double salary were to be given to elders who undertook the two kinds of duty or who laboured with special earnestness. There was no such rigid scale of giving and receiving in the early Church, nor should there ever be, for it is one of those matters which should be largely left to Christian love and to Christian liberty. But no one can read this utterance of Paul's, and several other passages like it, without seeing that the objection raised sometimes to a "paid ministry" has no countenance from him. In his first letter to the Corinthians he frankly says, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." At its best, the ministry must be a sacrifice; for even the leaders in it would prosper more in a worldly sense as leaders in any other profession, while as for others, who constitute the vast majority, God only knows the miserable struggle with poverty, the constant anxiety to meet the necessary expenses of the home, the depression which comes from physical want, the life-long self-denial of those who

are among the bravest and best of God's servants. It is true that loving and spiritual service can never be repaid by any money consideration, and it is also true that the sympathy, the loyalty, and the prayerfulness of his people are a minister's best reward; but it is the solemn duty of the Church, which demands his whole time and strength, at least to save him from want, and, as far as possible, from the anxiety and fret of worldly care.

In order to enforce what he is urging, the apostle now draws an argument from the scriptural command, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." The allusion is, of course, to the peculiar and clumsy mode of threshing adopted in the East. Oxen were driven hither and thither over the reaped corn, in order that, by their feet or by the implement they dragged behind them, the grain and chaff might be separated. It was customary among heathen peoples to fix a muzzle over the mouth of an ox so employed, and even to fasten a sort of basket round the mouth of a slave engaged in grinding corn, lest in their hunger they should eat. But God's law, as given by Moses, distinctly forbade this, as it did every other cruelty and injustice. In the season when the results of work were being rejoiced over, it was ordained that slaves and strangers, and even "dumb driven cattle," were to share in the bounty of God. This was only one example out of many of the way in which our Heavenly Father inculcated kind and considerate behaviour to the brute creation, and the

duty was emphasised by the Lord Jesus and His apostles.

> "I would not enter on my list of friends
> The man who wantonly sets foot upon a worm"—

should therefore be the feeling of every Christian; and in ourselves and in our children we should patiently and prayerfully cultivate kindness and consideration for the dumb creatures around us. Now, says the apostle, if this is God's law for those who are our servants, much more is it God's law for those who are our brethren, especially for those who are laying themselves out for the public good or for the spiritual welfare of others. If that was fitting, how much more this!

Then he turns from Scripture to a common proverb which our Lord quoted on two occasions, namely, when addressing the twelve apostles and when commissioning the seventy. The common sense of mankind had drawn a conclusion which thus received the stamp of Christ's approval as being exactly in conformity with the Divine law, "The labourer is worthy of his reward." And we ought to make a note here of the source whence Paul draws his illustration. Conversant as he was with Judaism, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, familiar with the Mosaic institutes in all their details, he never illustrates ministerial duties from the Jewish priests, but for purposes of illustration he freely makes use of the builder, the soldier, the racer, and here even of the ox and the common day labourer. And this reminds us that what is true of God's chosen servants is

equally true of the ordinary workman or of the ill-paid clerk. There is unrighteousness in this respect in warehouses and shops, on tram-cars and in workrooms. Too often the overstocked labour-market is taken advantage of by wealthy men in a way, and to a degree, which is cruel, shameful, and sinful. It is not simply that the body of the employed is injured, but the mind and the soul. Young fellows who work bravely and steadily cannot afford to marry and have a home of their own, while sometimes girls are known to sell themselves, body and soul, for bread. God will call this nation to a reckoning soon, and bring woe here and hereafter on all those who defraud the hireling and oppress the widow and the orphan. Nor is it money only, but it is time too, of which multitudes are robbed; and the long hours spent in painful toil by tired men, and weakly women, and growing lads and girls, call loudly for redress. In more senses than one we need to listen to the Divine message, "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

It is time that we turned to another duty owing to the ministry, for the apostle reminds us that—

II. Its Reputation should be Cherished.

1. *We ought to be slow to believe evil.* "Against an elder" (here used in the official sense and not with reference to age) "receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses," or (as the Revised Version has it), "except at the mouth of two or three witnesses." The reference is obviously to a well-known Mosaic law. Timothy was not to be credulous of evil reports, he was to pay no attention to mere gossip, and still less was

he to show any encouragement to slanderers. He was not appointed specially as a judge; but in contentions, such as unhappily arose in the Church, his authority would often be appealed to. Indeed, Paul himself strongly urged Christians to settle their differences among themselves, and not to bring their disputes before heathen tribunals; and any one who knows the scandal caused, and the practical injustice done in modern days, even in English law courts, through following the contrary course, will see how wise this counsel was. Timothy, then, often had to make inquiries which were delicate and difficult; and from haste, or from prejudice, he might be tempted to decide on defective evidence; so he was urged to insist on united and concurrent testimony before crediting a charge against a Christian, especially against an elder, whose election to office by the Church was itself a weight in the scale of favourable judgment. But how broad the counsel is, and how needed still. Again and again noble reputations have been ruined by slander, and the injustice and wickedness of the charges have only been demonstrated when it was too late to repair the wrong. Men of lofty integrity and of stainless purity have lived under a cloud for years, because of some disgraceful slander, greedily caught up and propagated, not only by the world, but by professing Christians.

"A whisper broke the air,—
A soft light tone, and low,
Yet barbed with shame and woe;
Now, might it only perish there,
Nor further go!

"Ah, me! a quick and eager ear
Caught up the little meaning sound!
Another voice has breathed it clear,
And so it wandered round
From ear to lip, from lip to ear,
Until it reached a gentle heart,
And that—it broke."*

Be jealous of the reputation of your brethren and sisters, and not least of the fair fame of those who speak for Christ, lest the Lord Himself be wounded, and His cause injured through them.

But while we are to be slow to believe evil—

2. *We ought to be brave in the rebuke of evil.* No fear of man, no mincing words to please fastidious ears, no wish to smother up iniquity, should be ours. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." The reference is not to Christians who have been thoughtlessly hurried into occasional and instantly regretted acts of transgression, but to those given to sinning, known to be sinners; and for such there was to be no toleration. It is no easy matter to know how best to secure the means of moral discipline. Exposure sometimes does good, and sometimes harm. It is one of those difficulties in which we may pray for, and expect, the wisdom that comes from above. We ought to be tender with those who (to use Paul's phrase) are "overtaken in a fault;" and there are wrongs done which are best settled between ourselves and the offender alone, as Jesus told us. We should consider the nature of the sin, the tone of society in regard to it, the necessity

* L. E. Landon.

or otherwise of making an example of some offender, as when Ananias and Sapphira were so awfully dealt with. But what we are bound to see to is this, that there shall be no manner of room for doubt, either on the part of the world or of the Church, that we Christians "cannot bear those that are evil." And if there be any who have made a loud profession of religion while they are notoriously sinners, we are bound by fealty to our Lord to rebuke such an one before all, that others also may fear.

Our third duty towards the ministry is that—

III. ITS ASPIRANTS SHOULD BE APPROVED.—"Lay hands suddenly (or hastily) on no man." The custom of the laying on of hands dates back to patriarchal times. Jacob laid his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh when he blessed them. It was an appropriate indication of the subject of prayer, a solemn act of designation and of dedication; and in the apostolic days it was used to sanction and ratify the elective act of the Church. Hence, in the previous chapter, reference is made to the gift which was Timothy's "through the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The apostle's meaning is this, Timothy was not to be rash in his appointments, he was to take pains to discover the godliness of every man called to exercise any kind of religious influence over others. This is applicable still, and to Sunday school teachers as much as to pastors. The Church, by prayer and by thought, should see that the distribution of its work is made according to the varying gifts of each, and that it is intrusted to none whose lives are out of harmony with their Christian profession.

In such work we are not to be ruled by caprice, ex-

cluding one we dislike; nor by partiality, appointing our personal friends, or those having some claims upon us. "I charge thee" (says Paul) "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality."

What could be a stronger inducement to the keeping of these commands than the realisation of the fact that an unseen God and holy angels are near us, and that all our works, and even our purposes, are open and naked before Him with whom we have to do! All sinister motives are banished by the coming of this light; all inferior considerations sink to nothingness in presence of these awful realities; all respect of persons, and fear of man, fade in the thought that we are standing in the sight of God. We have not to approve ourselves to man, but to God! The applause that follows success, the hiss that waits on failure, are lost in the tones of that voice which is as the sound of many waters. What have we Christians to fear from the world? what have we to gain from it? We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and there some brilliant work will become dim, and some obscure work will appear radiant with heavenly beauty. "Let us therefore labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him."

And there is yet another word here for every Christian, especially for those who work for the Master, namely this—"Be not partakers of other men's sins; keep *thyself* pure," for the emphasis in the original is to be laid just there. It is easy enough to see other people's

faults, and even to rebuke them; but beware lest any have occasion to turn on you and say, "Physician, heal thyself." Purity in the sense of chastity is, no doubt, included here, for an impure life is fatal to a Christian and ruinous to his influence for good—nay, even if such evil is only harboured within, it will prove the paralysis of spiritual life. But Paul refers chiefly to the blameless, holy deportment, which is the truest witness that Christ is dwelling within us, and which adds an authority to spoken words which none can gainsay or resist. If we would have this we must come to Christ for cleansing, because even those in heaven had not stainless robes on earth, but they washed them and "made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And if we would keep unspotted from the world, and walk steadfastly amid the slanderers and the scorners bearing the white flower of a blameless life, we (like John) must abide near Jesus and learn to lean upon His breast.

This attitude of soul was the desire of Longfellow for his brother who was being set apart for the ministry, and we close with his words, praying that they may be fulfilled in each of us—

"Christ to the young man said—'Yet one thing more;
If thou wouldst perfect be,
Sell all thou hast and give it to the poor,
And come and follow Me!'

Within this temple Christ again, unseen,
Those sacred words hath said,
And His invisible hands to-day have been
Laid on a young man's head.

And evermore beside him on his way
The unseen Christ shall move,
That he may lean upon His arm and say—
'Dost Thou, dear Lord, approve?'

Beside him at the marriage feast shall be,
To make the scene more fair;
Beside him in the dark Gethsemane
Of pain and midnight prayer.

O holy trust! O endless sense of rest!
Like the beloved John
To lay his head upon the Saviour's breast,
And thus to journey on!"

V.

ASCETICISM.

(1 Tim. v. 23.)

This verse has given rise to much controversy between total abstainers and their opponents. To the former it seems incredible that an inspired apostle should, under any circumstances, have recommended the use of intoxicants, and they have ingeniously attempted to show that the wine was not fermented; while their opponents sometimes use the verse as a commendation of the use of wine as a beverage. A careful examination of what Paul really meant is, therefore, in all respects desirable. It is quite clear that Timothy was a total abstainer, or this advice would not have been given; and it is equally clear that to recommend wine as a medicine is not identical with approving its use habitually as a beverage. The apostle was writing as a personal friend, and urged Timothy to use what was then considered to be the proper regimen for such debility as he suffered from; so that if modern research proved that the medical opinion of that day was mistaken, we could not convict Paul of unwisdom in counselling his friend to do what was then believed to be necessary for the restoration of his health.

In our opinion the duty of total abstinence is not insisted upon anywhere in Scripture as incumbent upon all Christians, however sternly drunkenness is denounced. But it does not therefore follow that it may not be a duty now, in view of the appalling ravages made by strong drink in our own time and country. As a means of personal safety, and as an encouragement and example to those who are in obvious danger, total abstinence may fairly be urged; but the argument that all alcoholic drinks are, under all circumstances and for all persons, so pernicious that no Christian can consistently touch them, seems, in the light of this passage and of others like it, untenable. Without further discussing this great question, we may learn much from our text on the nature and limits of Christian asceticism.

I. A CHRISTIAN IS CALLED UPON TO CARE FOR HIS PHYSICAL HEALTH.—The body is not to be despised or neglected. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost, to be thought of, and dealt with, reverently. The mortifications and scourgings of saints whose glory it was to be unkempt and unwashed was the result of Manichæism rather than of Christianity; and the gloom and savagery of theology at some periods of Church history were the products of this inhuman system. *Mens sanis* can only exist *in corpore sano*. Disordered nerves and deranged functions have much to do with gloomy views of God and hopeless views of men. For the sake, therefore, of one's moral and religious life, all that can be done to keep the body and brain in healthy condition and exercise, should be done religiously. Proper food, regular meals, sufficient

sleep, and wholesome recreation are to be attended to by the disciples of Jesus Christ. Because Timothy was apt to forget this he needed more than once the friendly counsel of wise-hearted Paul.

II. A CHRISTIAN IS BOUND TO CONTROL ANIMAL APPETITE.—Drunkenness, for example, is dealt with in Scripture not as a regrettable weakness, or as a slight peccadillo, but as a grievous sin; and this apostle, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "Be not deceived, neither fornicators . . . nor drunkards . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." In our text he does not say "use wine constantly," but "use a *little* wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine own infirmities," *i.e.*, as a medicine, because you need it; not as a beverage because you like it. Well has Calvin written, "If the temperate and abstemious are enjoined not to injure their health by too great reserve, no slight punishment awaits the intemperate who by surfeiting and drunkenness impair their energy. Such persons are not to be admonished, but rather, as brute animals, to be driven from their pabulum." Sin lies not in meats and drinks, but in those who misuse them to their own undoing. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"If thou well observe
The rule of *not too much*, by temp'rance taught,
In what thou eat'st and drink'st, seeking from thence
Due nourishment, not gluttonous delight,
Till many years over thy head returns:
So mayst thou live, till, like ripe fruit, thou drop
Into thy mother's lap, or be with ease
Gathered, not harshly plucked, in death mature."

VI.

RETRIBUTION AND REWARD.

(1 Tim. v. 24, 25.)

Scripture does not attempt to prove the existence of a future life, or the coming of a day of judgment. These are assumed throughout as facts to which divinely-implanted instinct and conscience steadily point. If it were not for this belief, religious men would be in doubt about the wisdom and justice of God, so often does vice appear to triumph. External happiness and misery are not in this life always the consequences of virtue and vice respectively, although sometimes they are; and this Paul frankly admits in our text. Its connection with what immediately precedes is difficult to see. Probably the counsel in verse 23 was interjected as a parenthesis, and the apostle now supplements what he had said in verse 20 about the sins of men.

I. The issues of evil deeds.

1. *Some are visible here.* They are "open beforehand" (Revised Version "evident"). There is no doubt about them. Like the blood of Abel they cry for vengeance. "Judgment" both from God and man deals with them, and in their condemnation the Church should take the lead.

Among them are those sins which society regards as offences against itself—murders, adulteries, thefts, and such-like. But we should be wrong if we imagined that these are always regarded by God in the same light as they appear to men. The vilest sins may be untouched by human law, and even tolerated by human opinion, whereas a convicted criminal may be at the same time a pardoned sinner.

2. *Some are revealed hereafter.* "They follow after." The men who commit them finish their earthly course, and leave behind them a good reputation; but their sins, unperceived or uncondemned by society, in silent procession follow after into the invisible world, and in the day of judgment will stand face to face with the sinner. The sins may have been secret, or so veiled that they were not recognised in their hideousness; but the day of revelation and retribution is coming, and "let not that man think he shall escape the righteous judgment of God."

> "There is no strange handwriting on the wall,
> Through all the midnight hum no threatening call;
> Nor on the marble floor the stealthy fall
> Of fatal footsteps. All is safe. Thou fool,
> The avenging deities are shod with wool!"

II. The issues of Good Works.—The same principle is applied to these as to evil deeds. The encouragement is as trustworthy as the warning. Every life has its manifestation hereafter as well as here, where at best it can only be partial. We are reminded that by-and-by there will be a manifestation of the sons of God—"Then

shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

1. *The visible harvest.* Those who live and work for a Heavenly Master are not left without reward. (1.) *In their own souls* there is recompense—peace and joy, and spiritual growth. They are blessed in blessing others, or even in trying to do so. (2.) *In the results on others*—the ignorant taught, the despairing encouraged, the lost saved. "He that winneth souls is wise."

2. *The coming harvest.* This will be far greater. We cannot tabulate spiritual results. They reach far beyond our vision, and elude our analysis. But our Lord has taught us in Matt. xxv. that those who have quietly served Him will be amazed at what they did in His name, so great will be the issues of their work. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Let us learn the following lessons from our text:—

1. *Convicted sinners are summoned to repentance.* Their condemnation by men is a warning of heavier condemnation.

2. *Secret offenders may well tremble.* The day of revelation is not far off, and none will escape it.

3. *Successful workers for Christ should be unfeignedly thankful.* Results achieved should inspire new effort and sacrifice.

4. *Discouraged servants of the Heavenly Master may take to themselves hope and courage.* "No toil for Him shall be in vain."

SERMONETTES ON SIXTH CHAPTER.

I.

UNDER THE YOKE.

(1 Tim. vi. 1.)

The phrase "under the yoke" fitly expresses the pitiable condition of slaves, to whom Paul here addresses himself. A "yoke" is laid on the neck of a creature when it has been taught the uselessness of resistance to superior force. Henceforth the poor animal which is said to have been "broken in" must obey another will than its own, and is at the absolute disposal of its master and owner, who may use it, sell it, kill it, as he chooses. Of all the hideous iniquities which have cried to Heaven for redress, slavery, which places a man in such a position to his fellow, is one of the worst. It is as pernicious to the owner as it is to the slave. Dr. Thomson has well said—"It darkens and depraves the intellect; it paralyses the hand of industry; it is the nourisher of agonising fears and of sullen revenge; it crushes the spirit of the bold; it is the tempter, the murderer, and the tomb of virtue; and either blasts the felicity of those over whom it domineers, or forces them to seek for relief from their sorrows in the gratifications and the mirth and the madness of the passing hour." We need only turn to the

tear-stained annals of American slavery to confirm such statements as these; and when to scenes like those depicted in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" we add the awful destruction of life of which Arab traders in Africa are guilty, we can well believe that the blood of our brothers and sisters has cried piteously to the God of righteousness, of love, and of freedom. Ancient slavery was not less dreadful than that of modern times. Even Homer felt constrained to say, "The day that reduces a man to slavery takes from him the half of his virtue." It is as important as it is interesting to consider how Christianity dealt with this terrible wrong,—the more so because all was not done which we might have expected.

In the days of our Lord, and of His apostles, slavery was a time-honoured and widely ramified institution. It was recognised in the laws as well as in the usages of the empire. So numerous were those "under the yoke," that Gibbon, taking the empire as a whole, considers it a moderate computation to set down the number of slaves as equal to the number of freemen. In Palestine the proportion would probably be less, but in Rome and other great cities the proportion would be far greater. There was scarcely any menial work undertaken in the empire except by slaves, and much of the skilled labour was done by servile hands. Christianity, with its proclamation of equality and brotherhood, came face to face with this gigantic system of legalised property in human flesh, and we want to know how the Gospel dealt with it.

I. LET US FIRST SEE WHAT CHRISTIANITY DID NOT DO FOR THE SLAVES.—That the followers of Him who cared

most for the poor and needy, and who longed to break every yoke, pitied these slaves in their abject and humiliating condition, goes without saying. But they certainly did not urge the slaves to escape, or to rebel, nor did they make it an absolute necessity to church membership that a slave-owner should set all his slaves free. The Epistle to Philemon is an unmistakeable proof of this; for though Paul plainly told that slave-owning Christian what he thought good feeling should dictate, he did not give him an apostolic command. Indeed, throughout the Epistles hardly an allusion is made to the civil aspect of slavery, and hardly a hint is given of the desirability of freedom. We may be quite sure that such a man as Paul would not be insensible to the evils of slavery, and further, that it was not from any deficiency in moral courage that he did not urge manumission; but told some slaves to remain in the condition in which they were, and, by God's help, to triumph over the difficulties and sorrows peculiar to their lot.

Strange as this may seem at first sight, was it not wise? Did it not prove in the long-run by far the best thing for the slaves themselves, leading to a more complete extirpation of slavery than if more drastic methods had been tried at first? If emancipation of all slaves had been put in the forefront of the claims of Christianity, the new religion would at once have been placed under the ban of the empire, as a system which, under the guise of religion, really aimed at the overthrow of society, and the kindling of the flames of servile war; and there would have been no hope of mercy from his owner for

any slave who had ventured to find hope and comfort in the fellowship of Christ's Church. The eternal verities of our faith would not have gained a hearing amongst the infuriated people, who would have considered that their legal interests and hereditary rights were being threatened. And if it be urged that, short of this, the apostles ought at least to have commanded every slave-owner to emancipate his slaves, as an essential to his profession of faith, it may be answered (judging from the experience of the poor whites amid a slave population), that the manumitted slaves cast out of one class would have found no welcome in another,; and that it would be for their good to remain legally in bondage, but practically free, in the service of a believing master.

II. LET US SEE, THEN, WHAT CHRISTIANITY DID FOR THE SLAVES.

1. *It taught masters their responsibilities.*—They were not only to avoid the lash, but even to "forbear threatening," and were always to do such things as were just and equal, remembering that they also had a Master in heaven.

And these lessons are needed still by all employers of labour, and by all mistresses of servants, for although they have no longer the despotic power of the masters to whom Paul wrote, they have opportunities for usefulness which an angel might desire, in the rebuke of faults, in kindly watchfulness over companionships, in the provision of wholesome literature, and in the encouragement of industry and thrift, of purity and honesty. A Christian master in those early days was taught to treat even his slaves as rational beings,—

ay, as brothers and sisters, who were dependent on his care, and both the discipline and instruction of the Church thus ameliorated the condition of many a bondsman.

2. *It inculcated on the slaves a course of conduct which would often lead to their legal freedom.*—Under Roman law liberty was held out as an encouragement to slaves to be honest, industrious, sober, and loyal; and therefore any Christian slave who obeyed the laws of Christ would be on the high-road to emancipation. Liberty thus won by character was a better thing than liberty won by force or by fraud; and was more accordant with the genius of Christianity.

3. *It gave dignity to those who had been despised and who had despised themselves.*—We cannot wonder that the oppressed listened with wondering thankfulness to the message of the Gospel. Treated only as chattels, things to be bought and sold, they heard that within the limits of their lowly sphere they might be the witnesses of Jesus Christ, the bearers of heaven's light into those dark places where cruelty and lust were brooding; and they would go back from a Christian assembly to their menial toil, feeling, "God is my Master, and I will do my work for Him —He is watching me, He is helping me,—and even His well-beloved Son was content for me to die the death of a slave." The work, which had once been a drudgery, became a sacred service; and this your toil and mine may surely be.

4. *But, besides all this, Christianity laid down principles which necessitated the ultimate destruction of slavery.*—

It taught that all men had a *common origin*, that God had made of one blood all nations; and that men of every class were to join together in the wonderful prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." It revealed the *infinite condescension* and unspeakable love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for all—whose life, and words, and sacrifice had taught the truth that it was a nobler thing to minister than to be ministered unto. It proclaimed a *coming Judgment-day*, when secret things would be laid bare, when no man would escape because of his greatness, nor be overlooked because of his mean condition. No one could really believe such truths as these without dealing rather as a brother than as a despot with those who served him. Thus the lot of the slaves was everywhere ameliorated, till it was safe and wise to ring the death-knell of the system. And many a fervent Christian in those days would cheer the slaves who listened to him as she did of whom the poet sings—

> "And oft the blessed time foretells
> When all men shall be free;
> And musical as silver bells
> Their falling chains shall be."

Thus, gradually and wisely, liberty triumphed over bondage. Christianity did not come into society as an external force, but as an internal life which worked silently and surely. It was as leaven hidden in the meal, which transformed every particle as it was reached, until by God's blessing the whole was leavened.

Learn, then, to trust to principles rather than to organi-

sation. Let life be more to you than law, and change of life more than change of law. Care for character first, believing that circumstance will care for itself. And finally, in conflict with evils deep and widespread as ancient slavery, be patient, and have unwavering faith in the God of righteousness and love!

II.

CHRISTIAN SLAVES AND THEIR MASTERS.

(1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.)

In some of his Epistles Paul had written words which might have created a spirit of insubordination and revolt among the Christian slaves; but such injunctions as these before us would tend to avert that danger. Not only in Ephesus, but in Corinth, in Rome, and in other great cities there were Christians who were disposed to spurn outward restraints on the ground of their spiritual calling, to disregard the duties of the stations they had to fill, and to forget that it was not always right to claim their rights. Slaves were naturally most in danger of this, and therefore earnest exhortations were addressed to them more often than to their masters. It was not that masters were less guilty of wrong-doing, nor was it that the apostle was afraid to rebuke those in high social position, but as a matter of fact there would be very few slave-owners in the early Church. Not many great, not many mighty, were called. God chose the poor of this world to be rich in faith. And none were more ready than were the slaves, and those just above them, to welcome a Saviour who looked lovingly on the degraded and

miserable, and who proffered them salvation from evil in time and in eternity.

Some slaves had positions of comparative comfort, others of abject, hopeless misery. Many masters were despotic, others were kindly, and a few, like Philemon, were Christian. The apostle here speaks of the duties of slaves, first, to masters who were unbelievers, and, secondly, to those who were believers.

I. A SLAVE WHO BELONGED TO A HEATHEN MASTER was, nevertheless, to render him all the obedience and honour due to his position, because otherwise the Christian doctrine would be "blasphemed." And it certainly would have been if a Christian slave had maintained that, as a follower of Christ, he was justified in disobedience, in the assertion of his equality, and in the endeavour to win it by violence. Even now it is too little remembered by Christians who fill the more obscure spheres that they are living witnesses for Christ, to His honour or to His shame. Some worldly men will frankly tell you that, from their experience, they would rather not have professing Christians in their offices or warehouses, because, on the whole, they are less thorough, less punctual, less obliging, than those who make no such profession. And who has not heard mistresses complain of servants who assume airs and expect privileges on the ground that they are members of a church? Injury is thus done by a few inconsistencies which neutralise the faithful service of the many. For to say that incompetence and untrustworthiness are usual with Christian men and women is to state what is untrue. Faithful work is constantly being done by those who have but

scant encouragement and miserably inadequate remuneration, and is done with cheeriness and thoroughness, because Christians feel that in it they are serving the Lord Christ. Keep up the good repute of the Christian name in any sphere you fill, and remember that, "whatsoever good thing any one does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

The annals of the Church do not contain records of all the brave services rendered by obscure disciples, but the Lord has His "book of remembrance," in which they are all written. Many a heathen master was rebuked amid his career of profligacy by the saintly lives of Christian slaves who had given themselves up to the Lord of purity; and probably the hearts of many were touched through the prayers of those they had despised. We have read of a negress in the Southern States who was caught praying by her master, and cruelly beaten for her pains. Stripped and tied fast to the post, as the blood-stained whip ceased for a moment to fall on the quivering flesh, she was asked if she would give over praying. "No, massa, never!" was the answer; "I will serve you, but I must serve God." Again the lashes rained down on her bleeding back; but when once more they ceased, the voice of the follower of Jesus was heard praying, "O Lord, forgive poor massa, and bless him." Suddenly the whip fell from his hand; stricken with the finger of God, he broke down in penitence. Then and there the prayer was answered,—the godless master was saved through the faithfulness of the slave he had despised. We may be sure that more than one such convert was

rejoiced over by angels centuries ago in homes where Paul's message was heard and heeded.

II. BUT THE APOSTLE ADDRESSES ALSO THE SLAVE WHO BELONGED TO A BELIEVING MASTER.—We who have been brought up in a land whose boast it is that every slave becomes free directly his foot touches its shore can hardly understand how any Christian man could be a slave-owner. We hold the belief of John Milton:—

> "God gave us only over beast, fish, fowl,
> Dominion absolute; that right we hold
> By His donation; but man over man
> He made not lord; such title to Himself
> Reserving, human left from human free."

But we must not overlook the insidious and powerful influence of custom, which makes a sin so familiar that we do not trouble to investigate it. We deal with it as a sentinel does with one he has allowed to pass without challenge;—he thinks it all right, and lets him pass again and again, until at last he is horrified to find he has been giving admission to a foe. John Newton, for example, after his conversion (which was as genuine as it was remarkable), carried on for years the inhuman traffic of slavery, and felt his conscience at rest so long as he did what he could for the bodily comfort of the slaves. He was quite insensible to the sinfulness of slavery until it pleased God to open his eyes, which had been blinded by custom. And at the close of last century an American gentleman left a plantation well stocked with slaves to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and was

evidently unconscious of any inconsistency. It is not to be wondered at that, in the early days of Christianity, disciples of Jesus were similarly deceived. Instead of condemning them, let us ask ourselves whether custom is not blinding us to other sins. Are there no pleasures and amusements indulged in by professing Christians which are condemned by the holy law of God, but enjoyed without a thought of the evil in them? Are there no transactions on 'Change, are there no tricks in trade, which, though constantly going on and shared in by members of the Church, are contrary to the honesty and truthfulness which the Lord demands of all His followers. Brethren, let us judge ourselves, that we may not be condemned with the world.

We can understand, then, how it came to pass that some believing masters held slaves. How were they to be dealt with? Their slaves were not to despise them because they were brethren, as if the declaration of spiritual equality had destroyed civil distinctions, as if membership in the same church warranted a servant in being disobedient, impudent, careless, or self-indulgent. On the contrary, they were "the rather" to do them service, because those who were faithful and beloved would have the benefit of such service.

It is evident that obedience to these commands would make the religion of Jesus Christ appreciated even in the households of the godless, while in the homes of Christian masters it would modify the curse of slavery, transforming into silken bonds of loving loyalty the iron fetters which ate into the flesh.

And in the varied occupations of life at the present day such results may be seen. Menial employment may be ennobled. Duty done for a master or employer may prove the service of God. The drudge of the house may become loved and trusted as a sister in Christ, who, while never presuming on her profession of religion, is constantly doing more than wages can ever repay, and who, as the servant of others, is proving herself to be the servant of Jesus Christ who answers her prayer.

"Oh, use me, Lord, use even me,
Just as Thou wilt, and when and where,
Until Thy blessed face I see,
Thy rest, Thy love, Thy glory share."

III.

A CONTRAST BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE TEACHING.

(1 Tim. vi. 3-5.)

At the close of the second verse Paul urges Timothy not to be silent, but to "teach and exhort" the Christians in Ephesus on the subject of slavery. Even questions like that, which affected social and civil life, were not to be left untouched. But the enunciation of general principle was to be preferred to the advocacy of any special scheme for social amelioration. A good rule for Christian teachers still.

It is evident from these verses that the apostle had more belief that many have now in the interdependence of sound doctrine and good character. Belief affects action, and action affects belief. For example, if a professing Christian allows himself to doubt the efficacy of prayer, he will either give up praying or will become a mere formalist, which in God's sight is much the same thing; and, on the other hand, the discontinuance of prayer will strengthen his belief that prayer is useless. And this is only a special example of a general truth. Hence it is that the association of false doctrine with

wrong conduct, and of sound doctrine with practical godliness, is so manifest and so constant in these epistles.

Reference is made here to—

I. The Wholesomeness of Christ's Teaching.—The apostle speaks of "wholesome words," a translation which we prefer to that given in the Revised Version ("sound words"), because it conveys the idea of imparting health to men and to society. Christ's teaching is the ozone of the moral atmosphere.

1. *It concerned itself with practical questions.*—The Sermon on the Mount (which is the chief specimen given us of His teaching) proves this to demonstration. Its effect was to create within His disciples a distaste for idle speculations, and for questions the discussion of which could not profit; and in this it was diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Rabbis and of most philosophers, ancient and modern. As Jesus Himself put it: a candle was not lighted by Him in order to be looked at or talked about; but that it might give light to all that were in the house. In other words, the Christian religion is to be used rather than to be discussed, and is meant to throw light upon all the obscurities of life's pathway until it leads up to the light of heaven.

2. *His teaching was embodied in His perfect life.*—This made it the more helpful. These slaves, for example, to whom the apostle had been speaking, wanted to know what they were to do under the provocations and hardships of their lot. And nothing could help them more than the knowledge of Him whose gentleness was never at fault; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He

suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. And, depend upon it, the more we also bring thoughts of Christ into our life, the less shall we have of uncertainty and of weakness.

3. *His teaching tended to the increase of godliness.*—"The doctrine which is according to godliness," means the teaching which makes men more like God—in holiness and righteousness and love.

But in sharp contrast with this is presented—

II. THE UNWHOLESOMENESS OF FALSE TEACHING, the effects of which were visible in the character of those who accepted and taught it.

1. *Self-sufficiency* was written on the forehead of each of them. As Paul says, "He is proud," literally "carried away with conceit," "knowing nothing." Indeed those two, ignorance and conceit, are twin sisters, and you seldom find the one without the other. The learned man speaks so simply that you wonder at the honours he has received; but the shallow scholar makes the hearers gape at his parade of incomprehensible words. The truly great man seems, when you meet him, simple and unaffected as a child; but bustling self-importance is the garb of small authority. A footman is generally more awe-inspiring than his master. And this was true of pretentious teachers in Paul's days, of whom, he says, they are "carried away with conceit."

2. *Love of verbal disputes* was another characteristic of theirs. The word translated "doting" indicates a distempered and sickly condition, which turns away from the "wholesome" food of the Gospel; just as a child

with a poor appetite refuses bread and butter, and can only daintily pick and choose among delicacies, and the more he has of them the worse his appetite becomes.

It is a bad sign when *society* has unwholesome appetites, caring more for art than for truth—more for manner than for matter; for these are signs of decadence such as preceded the fall of the Roman empire. And in the *Church* it is a very serious symptom of spiritual weakness and disease to be eager over the "word-fighting" which Paul alludes to here, quibbling about forms and ceremonies, fighting for or against modes of expression, until pugnacity dethrones brotherliness. No wonder that we are warned against discussions, "whereof come envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds."

3. *A carnal appetite* was displayed by these opponents of our Lord's wholesome words.

Our translation, "supposing that gain is godliness," is incorrect and misleading. No one supposes, or ever supposed, that worldly gain is godliness, or leads to it; but many in all ages have been guilty of what Paul suggests, namely, of "using godliness as a way of gain." In other words, these men, corrupted as they were in mind, in the whole inner life, and "bereft of the truth," only professed the Christian faith so far as it was serviceable to their worldly interests. Any one who knows what depraved Jews, like Simon Magus, did, both before and after the Gospel era—working on the credulity and superstitions of the people to their own advantage—can understand what Paul condemned here and elsewhere.

And in these days, when the winnowing fan of persecution is no longer felt on the floor of God, separating the chaff from the wheat, we must be on our guard, and diligently examine ourselves, that the higher life we profess to live may be animated by the highest motives. In order that it may be so with us, let us seek to live near our Lord, who is the inspirer of all holiness and the giver of true life.

Not only will He teach us, as he taught Paul, how to deal with all the difficulties and anxieties which face us in social and religious life; but the consciousness of His presence will keep us safe, as the down on the seabird's breast enables the bird to shake off the spray and keep itself warm and dry, though it floats over the waters of a stormy sea.

IV.

CONTENTMENT.

(1 Tim. vi. 6–8.)

The apostle having urged Timothy to withdraw from fellowship with those who wished to use godliness as a means of getting on in the world, goes on to declare that when godliness is sincere—cherished for its own sake—it brings its own reward. He aimed this vigorous protest against the restless discontent and unhealthy ambition which will use any means, even hypocritical pretence to piety, to gain its ends. This is obviously quite a different thing from the wholesome enterprise which naturally brings a man more important work, and prepares him to do it. The motive of such enterprise determines whether it be a virtue or a sin. To be honest merely because it seems the best policy to be so, is not real honesty; and the first strong temptation which offers advantage as a price of dishonesty, will get into its grip the man who acts on that maxim. To do right because it pays, is not righteousness in the judgment of God. Here, therefore, the apostle gives us teaching which may find practical application in the life of every one of us. In effect he says to each—

I. SEEK THE BLESSEDNESS OF GODLY CONTENTMENT.

1. *No doubt contentment apart from godliness is a good thing.*—Seneca and Lucretius, and other Pagan philosophers, were never tired of singing its praises; and Socrates, when he walked through the streets of Athens, and saw around him the evidences of wealth, art, and culture, exclaimed, "How many things there are which I can do without." (1.) *To some this feeling of contentment with their present condition seems constitutional.* There are men and women who have an easy-going disposition, which makes the best of everything. They are not greatly troubled by events which would crush others who are less happily endowed. They rise and fall on the waves of a stormy sea, ever buoyant, while their neighbours are like the piles driven fast into place, ragged and torn by their hopeless contest with the fret and wear of the water. (2.) *Others again are content, not so much from happy temperament, as from the fact that the lines have fallen unto them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage.* Belonging to the rich and leisured classes, they have no temptation to win a position, or to make money, by unworthy means, for these are already theirs without effort; and it is a happy thing for England that many men who have no necessity to labour spend their leisure and talents in discharging public duties on the principle of *noblesse oblige.* Would that there were more of these, like the late Lord Shaftesbury, "the good Earl," as he was distinctively called, who all his life through fought against injustice and ignorance.

"If Heaven's approval and the people's praise,
Poverty's blessing, and the joy sublime
Of ministry that lifts the curse of crime,—
If these avail to dower our days with worth,
How happy was thy life, who wealth and birth
Mad'st not a perch for pleasure, pride, pretence,
But vantage ground for high beneficence!"

2. *It is not contentment, however, which is inculcated here so much as "godliness with contentment."*—Many a man has been content without being godly, who might have been saved had his content been disturbed and destroyed. "Godliness" is more comprehensible to us who know God in Jesus Christ, for in Him we see God among men living and labouring in the circumstances by which we are surrounded. To be godly is to be Christlike, and besides the stainless purity, the changeless love of that most wonderful life, there was about it the sweet serenity which Paul here inculcates, arising from unfaltering trust in Divine wisdom and love. The Son of Man had not where to lay His head; women from Galilee followed Him, and ministered unto Him, but though He seemed dependent on their charity and thoughtfulness, yet there was no discontent or murmuring. It is harder to receive kindness graciously than to do it generously, but no feeling of pride ever led Him to refuse any well-meant effort to please or to help Him—Almighty Son of God though He was. And by His lowly life He has taught us the truth of His own words, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." This leads us to another lesson enfolded in these verses—

II. Entertain a Lowly Estimate of Yourselves.

"We brought nothing into this world." Of all God's creatures, the human child is most helpless, most dependent upon kindly care; and one of the lessons taught by the coming of an infant into the home is the lesson of human dependence. What have we, indeed, through life that we did not receive? The very powers which enable us to win position or wealth are as much divine gifts as the wealth itself. A successful man is apt to say, "Well, everything I have I fairly won. I am not indebted to any one. I am not one of those who merely step into the possession of property amassed by another. Whatever I have I made." Yes; but remember that it was God who gave thee power to get wealth. The strong physique, which has borne so well the wear and tear of life; the steady nerves, which in a crisis do not fail you; the resolute will, which never quails,—all these are a heritage, a gift from God, perhaps granted through a long line of ancestors, who have lived honestly, soberly, and godly in an evil world. No one here has reason for boasting or pride, but only for reverent gratitude to Him who has crowned us with loving-kindness and with tender mercy.

III. Estimate justly the Value of Earthly Things.

However precious worldly things may seem, it is certain "we can carry nothing out" of the world when we leave it. It is a narrow bed which will form the last resting-place even for the owner of a province or the ruler of a nation. The R. V. gives us a more correct, though more obscure, reading here—"For we brought nothing into this world,

for neither can we carry anything out." In other words, not only do we enter and leave the world in a state of destitution, as the A. V. suggests, but "our entering it is ordered with regard to our leaving it." The lesson exemplified in death, when we must leave everything, is exemplified also at our birth; so that from the very first we are taught to keep in view this great lesson of the subordinate value of worldly things. Our real blessedness lies not in what we have, but in what we are. Of course, there are some things needful for us while we dwell in this fleshly tabernacle—the "food and raiment" referred to here; but, having these for ourselves and for those entrusted to our care, we may be therewith content; not ambitious to die like one of those of whom men say, "He was worth tens of thousands," while God said, "He was poor and miserable." So short is the time in which we can use our present possessions that we may well pray for grace to use them to the utmost for the comfort and help of our fellows, and for the glory of God. Sad is the career and dark is the destiny of those who lay up treasures for themselves, and are not rich towards God.

V.

COVETOUSNESS.

(1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.)

"They that will be rich," is more clearly rendered in the R. V. "they that desire to be rich," *i.e.*, who wishfully plan to be so at any cost. Every one knows that this purpose is morally and spiritually fatal. Some of us are personally acquainted with men whose worldly success has unquestionably been their religious ruin. They have "fallen into temptation," to pride, worldliness, and selfishness; "and into a snare," getting so entangled that they seem unable to escape without using sinful means. Then as riches have increased they have fallen into "many foolish and hurtful lusts," indulgences, and pleasures, in which they have wasted their substance, and lost their moral fibre; and these "drown men in destruction and perdition," as a bag of gold, tied round the swimmer's neck, sinks him in the sea. Well may Bengel call this *tristis gradatio;* and nothing but the grace of God, which brings salvation, can arrest one who has started on that downward course.

True, Paul did not say, as our translators make him say, that "the love of money is *the* root of all evil"—

that it is the one sin from which all others spring; but he was surely right in declaring, as he did, that it is *a* root of all kinds of evil; for envy, hatred, murder, theft, falsehood, and all sorts of sin may be among its bitter fruits. This sin of covetousness is so possible to us all, whether our possessions are few or many, that we ought to think of it, and to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

I. The Dangers of this Temper of Mind are obvious.

1. *It leads many to deception and dishonesty.*—For example: in certain classes of manufacture it is notorious that labels of quantity or of quality are misleading; and though it is said that this is understood in the trade, and tacitly allowed for by the purchaser, yet, as the goods pass from hand to hand in our complicated civilisation, it is unquestionable that some are deceived, either in the home or in the foreign market. In shops, too, there is often a similar want of straightforward honesty. A clever salesman will present goods in such order as to disqualify the taste or touch for sound judgment. Or perhaps, at his first sale, he points out defects in order to win the confidence of the customer, and then abuses the confidence so created in order to pass off inferior goods. And this wrongdoing is not confined to tradesmen. It finds place in professional life, and in political life too, until a want of strict integrity in those who represent you, or serve you, comes almost to be expected. This is a sin against God. It is destructive of mutual confidence, of Christian integrity, of the good repute of a nominally Christian nation; and it is the Church's duty through

its teaching and through the lives of its members, to banish it from all the spheres of human activity.

2. *To get advantage to oneself is a false aim for any Christian life.*—The mistress, who has no care for her servants except to get as much work out of them as she can; who gives them no counsel, no sympathy, and no care: the employer, who has no consideration for those who work for him, and no thought for their well-being—these, and all like them, are failing of their duty and responsibility in the sight of God; and their sin is the greater in proportion to the weakness of those dependent upon them. Think of young women, homeless, almost friendless, glad to escape from the hot workrooms to breathe the night air of the streets, and who have no other place of recreation provided! Think of men, obliged to live near their work, who, because landlords have a monopoly of accommodation, are forced to pay exorbitant rents, and to suffer the results in immorality which follow on overcrowding. Think of the makers of cheap furniture who are dependent on wholesale houses, and are sometimes forced to sell at a nominal price, because they must take that or starve; until, squeezed dry, they are flung out to ruin. Think of others, ignorant of their legal rights, who are ruthlessly robbed by those who say "it is fair to use to the utmost one's superior shrewdness;" and in all such doings you will understand where Paul would apply his teaching in our day. The curses of God deservedly fell on ancient Babylon, and will surely fall on this modern Babylon if, as the prophet says, we make merchandise of the bodies and souls of men. And we

Christians are called upon, while living among those who do such things, to obey the command: "Be *ye* therefore merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful."

If you know how insidious these and other perils are, you may well pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

II. DEFENCES AGAINST SUCH EVILS are within our knowledge, and many are finding moral security through using them.

1. *Watch against the tendency to extravagant living.*—The absence of simplicity in some households leads to more evils than you think. It creates a demand for articles which cannot be had for the money, and hence arise misleading statements and adulterated goods; for supply follows demand. It leads to those long credits which are answerable for much of the unsoundness in trade, some purchasers hoping to be able by-and-by to meet expenses which they had no more right to incur than a shop-boy would have to borrow from his employer's till what he expects soon to repay. Be brave enough to be simple in your habits. Seek to live without ostentation. Be willing to give up the society of those mean acquaintances who think you their inferior because you live on a smaller income than they. Those who judge you for what you have—who will look coldly on you if you think it right to reduce your expenditure—are friends you can do better without. I would rather have one friend who stood by me because of what he saw in me, than have thousands who flattered me because I did well for myself.

2. *On the other hand, see to it that you do not bow down*

to worship the golden calf.—No idolatry is more prevalent than this. If a boy or girl at school is poorly dressed the child is soon made to feel it, and perhaps will say, on returning home for the holidays, with brimming eyes in remembrance of some bitter taunt, "I do wish you were rich, papa"—and such petty persecution runs through life; indeed, even the Church is tainted by this evil spirit. Men worship not the Christ, whose riches are those of love and truth, whose throne is the Cross, and whose crown is of thorns; but they worship the Herod, who sits among them "gorgeously apparelled," and it is for the Church to rise up in the greatness of her spiritual might to cast down the tyrant and exalt the Christ.

3. *Cultivate love for higher things than the world offers.*—Good will conquer evil by its own inherent force. We need what Dr. Chalmers beautifully called "the expulsive power of a new affection." Even love for the *home*, care for the children whom you have to mould and guide—though at the sacrifice of time which might be spent in money-getting—will help in the conquest of covetousness. A love of *study*, which demands the steadfast setting apart of some time for broadening and deepening your mental culture, is not without effect. The *love of God's Word*—leading to familiarity with men mentioned there, who cared little for outward possessions, and inducing fellowship with Him who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor; earnest *prayer* for a new heart and a right spirit—all these will foster within you the feeling of the men who stood alone among the crowds on the plain of Dura,

and said to the despot, "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

4. *Pray, brethren, for the spirit of heroism in common life.*—You will need it if you would keep poor for Christ's sake, for truth's sake, for righteousness' sake, believing the old proverb, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than great revenues without right."

Conclusion.—Some of you have already, with God's blessing, made your way in the world. By steady, earnest, honest work, you have attained a position, which naturally fell to you, and was not directly sought. Now you are rich enough to run some risk, to face some loss. God has given you the honour of being leaders in His army of righteousness, and those who are weaker and poorer than you are looking to you to take the lead in a crusade against unrighteousness. Will you fail them? Remember the words of Christ—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

"Set up Thy standard, Lord, that we,
Who claim a heavenly birth,
May march with Thee to smite the lies
That vex Thy groaning earth.

Yea, come! then, tried as in the fire,
From every lie set free,
Thy perfect truth shall dwell in us,
And we shall live in Thee."

VI.

THE MAN OF GOD.

(1 Tim. vi. 11.)

It would be interesting to collate from the New Testament all the titles which are given to the followers of Jesus Christ. We should discover that some were assumed by themselves, while others were given by their opponents, either in derision or simply by way of distinction. But they all suggest various phases of their dignity and responsibility, and therefore of ours also. The designation "Christians," which is now the most popular and general, was bestowed by the quick-witted inhabitants of Antioch, among whom, at a very early period, the followers of Christ made themselves felt as a distinct power. We read, "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." The name was probably meant as a joke, but it was accepted as an honour. For they were Christ's men—"Christians"—whose highest glory it was to be marked as Christ's followers and representatives. Not "Jesuits," you observe—the followers of Jesus, the man; but "Christians," the followers of the Christ, who was "anointed of God," to be the world's Saviour, Priest,

and King. It is certainly curious that the title thus given from without has almost superseded the names which were assumed within the precincts of the Church. Of these latter, "disciples" was the earliest; and in the Gospels this name is almost exclusively used to denote the ordinary followers of our Lord. To them He was what He had appeared to be to Nicodemus, "a Teacher come from God." But gradually they knew more of what their Lord was, and recognised more distinctly His unique position, until they were not satisfied with this name. Plato and Socrates, Buddha and Confucius, had their "disciples," who sat at their feet, and learnt of them; but Jesus Christ was infinitely higher than they. He came to reveal God not only in His words, but in His Divine Person, and they who were His were called upon not merely to give an assent to His teaching, but to believe in Him as their Lord and Saviour. To any one who inquired for salvation the answer of the Church was not, "Believe in this or that dogma," but "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." As this became more clearly recognised, the old name "disciple" was superseded by the higher name "Believer," which is generally used in the Acts of the Apostles.

But soon the effect of this belief in Christ became more manifest in lives that were consecrated and holy, and hence in the Epistles the Christians were reminded that they were "called to be saints," and are addressed as "saints," not because they were perfectly holy, but because they were consecrated to the Master. And with this title sprang up the word "Brethren;" because, the

reality of Christian love in the Church, and the close relationship which originated in the recognition of God's Fatherhood, could only be expressed by that tender and true title. These names, then, "disciples," "believers," "saints," "brethren," all present different phases of the Christian life, and we may use them as tests to ourselves, for all of them should be true of us. If we are "disciples," we learn of Jesus. If we are "believers," we trust implicitly in Him. If we are "saints," we have given ourselves to Him in joyful self-surrender; and if we are "brethren," we love each other with pure heart fervently, trying to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

The apostle uses here a different title from any of these—one more ancient, but in the New Testament more rare. Only in this verse, and in 2 Tim. iii. 17, does the phrase occur, "the man of God." Here we are reminded of the relationship which characterises such an one.

I. His Relations to God are suggested by the title itself, "man of God." This had formerly been distinctive of a prophet, and especially of Elijah, the great reformer, who so realised the truth underlying it that he began many a message by the favourite formula, "The Lord God of Israel, before whom I stand." In Ephesus, Timothy had to take up as decided a stand against prevailing evils as Elijah had maintained in the kingdom of Israel; and he too was to find strength and wisdom in the presence of God, whence he might come forth to the people as God's representative and spokesman. But

the title ought not to be confined to any official in the Church, for it is applied by Paul himself quite generally in his Second Epistle. Any devout man may be called a "man of God," if he is—

1. *Living near God* and coming forth to his duties, as Moses came from the mount of communion, reflecting the light of heaven. The habit of prayer is an essential of the Christian life, and in it we find our safeguard and inspiration. We can go and speak to God about our difficulties and perplexities, as the disciples went to their Master when the crowd was dismissed, saying, "Lord, declare unto us this parable." Let it not be spasmodic and fitful fellowship that contents you, but seek to enjoy the familiar walk and talk of which the Gospels give such happy exemplifications.

2. *Representing God* is the outcome of communion with Him. Reflection of light can only result from the incidence of light. A mirror shut up in a pitch-dark cellar is not to be distinguished by the eye from a flagstone, but placed in the sunlight it may reflect a whole heaven of beauty. If you would let your light shine before men, you must put yourself in true relation to the Sun of Righteousness. Those who are nearest to God most truly represent God. Walk in the light, and you will be recognised as the children of light.

And, again, no one would be called a "man of God" unless he was—

3. *Seeking God's ends.* It was because Timothy was by profession and in character "God's man" that the apostle assumes that his course would of necessity be different

from that of the worldly—that he would flee the things they loved. If a man occupies even a subordinate position in a business house, he is expected to care for its interests and engage in its affairs. Every one would discredit the assertion of one who said he represented a drapery establishment if, day after day, he was engaged in buying and selling timber or coal, and left all soft goods unregarded. And his assertion would be the more incredible if he was engaged in some trade which was not only different from, but antagonistic to, the one he professed to represent. But this only puts in a concrete, and almost in a coarse, form the idea of the apostle, that a man of God must of necessity flee from, and have nothing to do with, the evils which God hates.

II. His Relations to Sin are those of unconquerable repugnance.

1. *The nature of these sins* is exemplified in the words uttered just before by Paul against the love of money, the hurtful lusts of the human heart, and the foolish and evil practices to which these lead.

2. *The means of escape* from these are twofold. Sometimes we may meet and conquer a temptation, and sometimes we may more wisely flee from it. If a temptation comes in the course of daily duty, fight it; but if it lies outside that prescribed course, avoid it. Here the apostle says of sins, "flee" from them; but James says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Our Lord fought in the wilderness, and therein left us an example; but it was He who taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Concerning many worldly allurements, the

message of God's Word, especially to the young, is, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things."

Paul also deals with—

III. His Relations to Virtues.—Negative precepts distinguished the old dispensation, but the new dispensation is not content with them. Compare the Sermon on the Mount with the giving of the law on Sinai, and you will see abundant evidence of this. In harmony with the positive nature of the better dispensation, the apostle tells us not only to flee certain evils, but to follow after virtues. We are not merely to turn our backs on old pleasures, but we are to find new ones; we are to conquer the habit of living for self, by learning to live for others, for Christ's sake; and we shall flee the more rapidly from what God hates if we are eagerly following after what He loves. The virtues mentioned here are arranged in pairs.

1. *Righteousness and godliness* include all conduct towards God: obedience to His law, trust and reverence, devoutness and prayer.

2. *Faith and love* are the two essentials to such a life, for righteousness is the offspring of faith, and godliness is the offspring of love.

3. *Patience and meekness* have regard to our dealings with our fellow-men, especially with those who persecute or wrong us, and they are among the most difficult graces to exhibit. Perhaps their emphatic position in this text is given to them because of this—the more so as there was such novelty in this Christian ideal, that what had seemed to be defects to heathen moralists were elevated by Chris-

tianity in the most startling way into rare graces. "Patience" with those who misunderstand or malign us, and "meekness" in bearing affronts and enduring wrongs, we all have opportunities for exercising in business, in the home, and in other relationships of life. The fretful invalid, the exacting mistress, the disagreeable schoolfellow, the irritating brother or sister, the thoughtless customer, or the unreasonable client,—all these call for the exercise of the self-control and forgiveness which are here commended, and which we learn best on our knees in sight of the cross of Calvary.

"Let me not fret because of evil men;
Smooth Thou each angry ripple of my soul;
Reviled, oh let me not revile again,
And ever let Thy hand my rising warmth control.

Let not my peace be broken when the wrong
Conquers the right, but let me still wait on;
The day of right is coming, late, but long,
Long right beneath the sway of the all-righteous One.

When love no refuge finds but silent faith,
When meekness fain would hide its heavy head,
When trustful truth, shunning the words of wrath,
Waits for the day of right, so long, so long delayed;

Beneath the load of crosses and of cares,
Of thwarted plans, of rude and spiteful words;
Oh bear me up, when this weak flesh despairs,
And the one arm which faith can lean on is the Lord's."

VII.

THE CHRISTIAN CONTEST.

(1 Tim. vi. 12.)

There is some reason to suppose that Timothy was not naturally brave and adventurous—that it would be more difficult for him than for many to take up a bold, uncompromising stand against prevailing evils. His companionship with heroic Paul would greatly tend to develop what was thus lacking in him. In some respects their relation is parallel to that which afterwards existed between Luther, the uncompromising reformer, and Melancthon, the sensitive, scholarly divine. Love is often more readily excited by seeing in another graces which are coveted, but not possessed, than by the discovery of similarity of tastes, and this may account partly for Timothy's passionate loyalty to Paul, in whom he recognised the soldierly qualities which were not innate to himself. It is highly probable that Timothy, then an enthusiastic youth, was an eye-witness of the brutal treatment to which the great apostle was exposed in Lystra (Timothy's native town) when he was stoned and cast out like a dog, as one believed to be dead. Exhortations to bravery from such a man as that would come with

redoubled force. Nor were they without effect. A credible legend informs us that Timothy sealed his testimony with his blood during the celebration of the great festival of Artemis. This goddess whose worship had its centre in Ephesus, where Timothy faithfully laboured, must be distinguished from the well-known Artemis of the Greeks, the sister of Apollo—the goddess of the chase—the maiden divinity who was never conquered by love. The Ephesian Artemis was an ancient Asiatic divinity, to whom the Greeks gave that name; but she was a personification of the fructifying and all-nourishing power of nature. Her emblem was the moon, and her worship was almost as gross and licentious as that of the Roman Venus. It was the followers of this goddess who sought to kill Paul, when they crowded into the theatre and for the space of three hours cried, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" When her splendid festival was being held, and Timothy, as leader of the Christians, publicly protested against the scenes of license and frenzy, the infuriated mob turned upon him and beat him to death with their clubs. He knew what it was to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." This exhortation reminds us—

I. That the Christian Life is a Contest.—The word used by Paul refers to the contests in the arena rather than to those on the battlefield; but either figure would very fitly represent the struggle which the new life must wage with evils around and sins within. It is a "good" contest, because its motive is far higher than that which prompted the carnal and ambitious wrestlings in the

ancient games. It is better to conquer yourself than to conquer some one else; and it is infinitely nobler to find your reward in Christly character than in fading crowns. In order to gain the prize set before us struggle is essential, and if within you there has been no conflict in which conscience has conquered passion, or in which God's will has triumphed over yours, the real life has yet to begin within, and except a man be born again, "he cannot see the kingdom of God."

We are also reminded here—

II. That the Christian Life begins with a Call.—Paul is not referring to an office which Timothy had been called to fill by the Church, or by the apostle, but as the context shows to his life as a "man of God," as an avowed disciple of Jesus Christ. Speaking of his spiritual contest, he says, "Whereunto thou art also called;" and this could only mean called by the voice of God. There is no doubt that some of the metaphysical discussions which have been carried on by theologians on the subject of "a Divine call" have done enormous harm; but the Divine call as a practical religious experience is the sublimest and mightiest motive of which the human heart is capable. It is the beginning of spiritual life; it wakes up the soul to consciousness, as the archangel's trump will hereafter wake the realms of death. The history of the Church shows that nothing will do so much to nerve a man to heroic endurance as the deep persuasion that he has a Divine call. If, for example, you know that *God* has called you from sin, you dare not go back to it; if you are certain God

gave you your work, you will do it without waiting for reward, and without being discouraged by failure; and it is because His voice is calling that it is at your peril you stop your ears or harden your heart. But following on this is the fact—

III. That the Christian Life demands Confession.—When Paul reminds Timothy that he had "professed a good profession before many witnesses," he is alluding to his open and formal confession of the Christian faith. In those days there was a very broad line to be crossed before entering the Church; for the convert left his former faith, his former associates, and his former practices; and these were publicly abjured. Changed as the condition of society unquestionably is, there is a difference between the Church and the world; and there must be until the world is really Christ's, which it is far from being yet. And in some form or other, there ought to be a profession of faith on the part of those who really love and serve Christ Jesus. If, therefore, you are on His side, but secretly, or if you have allowed your former profession to die out, carefully consider this question, lest at last you come under the condemnation of those who are ashamed of Christ amid their daily associations; for Jesus says, "He that is not with me, is against me." To ask yourself why you are not an avowed Christian will lead to self-examination such as many perish for want of; for the answer to that question may be, "It is because I am not a Christian at all;" and that will bring you, with God's blessing, to instant penitence and earnest prayer; or the answer may reveal a moral

weakness and cowardice of which you have had no suspicion, and of which you may be well ashamed.

But not only is confession of Christ helpful because of the self-examination which precedes it, but also because it is a something to which appeal may afterwards be made with spiritual effect, as it is here. The act of publicly avowing love to Christ is an epoch in our spiritual history; a season of Divine inspiration, when we are lifted above the ordinary low level on which we live, and when we realise the blessedness and the responsibility of taking our stand on the Lord's side. Well would it have been with all of us if the standard then raised aloft had never been lowered in the presence of the foe! There is much to inspire some of us in the memories of the past, and much to inspire us all in the thought of what lies before us; for Paul reminds us—

IV. That the Christian Life receives its Crown.—Even here it is possible to "lay hold upon eternal life," which is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ, His Son. The apostle does not speak of it as the result of the contest, but as the substance of it, for we may have it here in its germ. "He that believeth on me," says our Lord, "shall never die." The death which many dread is but the putting off of the tabernacle in order that the heavenly temple may be entered. If the life we now live in the flesh is a life of faith on the Son of God, we already possess the eternal life whose enfranchisement from the body will be Heaven! "He that hath the Son hath life; but he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on Him."

VIII.

THE FIGHT OF FAITH.

(1 Tim. vi. 12.)

There is no doubt that our Revised Version correctly renders Paul's phrase when it introduces the definite article in the first clause of this verse, "Fight the good fight of *the* faith." In other words, Paul says, "Keep up the struggle which faith in Christ necessitates, against all temptation, in spite of all opponents." But we must not forget that faith is the very essence of this conflict, and that its vigour is essential to victory. This may be well called a "good fight," to which our Lord summons us, for it aims at the destruction of sin, which is the ultimate source of all our sorrows and fears. It results, not as human wars do in the impoverishment of the people and in the entry of cruel death and mourning into innocent homes, but in the elevation of the nations and in the eternal life of all who submit to the Conqueror. There is no uncertainty about the issue; all who follow Christ may feel the inspiration which comes to soldiers who know that their standard has never been trailed in the dust of defeat. Christ Jesus goes forth "conquering

and to conquer." But we need faith in Him to wage that warfare.

I. FAITH DISCOVERS OUR FOES.—We do not see them by mortal sense or by intellectual ability. Pleasures may be enervating us, prosperity may be injuring us, without any consciousness on our part that it is so; while we still welcome them with the fatuousness of a commander who flings open the gates of the citadel to what he believes to be a column of relief, but who finds out, when it is too late, that he has given himself into the power of the adversary. Whatever drags down your aspirations after holiness, and chains you to the present life, will appear to faith (which is spiritual sight) an enemy to be reckoned with. You want a higher standpoint than that of human opinion in order to see what God sees, and to know how and when you must strike. And many a one has found the mount of prayer to be, what the famous knoll was to Lord Raglan when he galloped to its summit in the crisis of the battle of the Alma—a vantage-ground whence to see the foes we have to fight.

II. FAITH ARMS US FOR THE CONFLICT.—In moral contests nothing will take the place of faith, by which we realise habitually the presence of God. Good impulse sometimes helps us; tender memories are not without effect; wholesome friendships, cherished reputations, have their place and power; but the one thing which will keep a man safe in every hour of real temptation is the conviction that He is near of whom Joseph said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

III. FAITH WINS THE VICTORY.—When our great Leader

was in the wilderness, tempted of the devil, He triumphed, not by any assertion of His Divine power, but by His unfaltering confidence in God. "Make these stones into bread, for this is essential to your support," suggested the adversary. "No," said our Master; "for my Father has said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" "Take the kingdoms of the world, for they are thine." "No; God's way of giving them to me is the best." "Cast Thyself down from this Temple, and angel-given deliverance will strengthen your faith." "No; I will trust, but I will not presume." It was the shield of faith which quenched all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and what was true for our Lord is true for all His followers. Let your prayer always be, "Lord, increase our faith," remembering that, whether for defence or for aggression, faith is the one thing needful. Cast yourself in trust upon Him, and He will not only forgive your sins, but in His good time will give you full deliverance and eternal victory.

"God never yet forsook at need
The soul that trusted Him indeed."

IX.

MOTIVES TO STEADFASTNESS.

(1 Tim. vi. 13–16.)

When earnest Christians realise that they are about to leave the world, they are concerned that those who will fill their places should be loyal to the principles they have tried to maintain. Nothing would cause more grief to a devout pastor than the foreboding that his work would be undone by his successor; and a Christian father would go down weeping to the grave if he knew that his own son would fling to the winds all which he had held dear. Paul felt as a pastor and as a father towards Timothy, and this accounts for the repeated and pathetic exhortations to fidelity which occur in these two letters.

The "commandment" which the young evangelist was to keep must be taken, in its broadest sense, as referring to the great principles of righteousness and truth which Christ Jesus had embodied and maintained. Although of celestial origin, this commandment would not appear to men "without spot," if its representatives were men of blemished reputation. Hence Paul adjures Timothy thus: "I give thee charge that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of

our Lord Jesus Christ"—that glorious epiphany which to the eager expectation of the early Christians seemed ever close at hand.

Two motives to such steadfastness are suggested in the verses before us: the one being drawn from the example of Christ, the other from the greatness of God. Glance at each in its order.

I. The Example of Christ is suggested in the allusion made to—

1. *His good confession before Pontius Pilate.* It is well for us when we either suffer, or compel, all the incidents of life to lead our thoughts back to Christ. It was partly in order to make this possible that the details of His life and ministry are so fully given in the Gospels. Temptations, troubles, friendships, joys, conflicts, all that go to make up our experience, find counterparts in Him, who in all points was made like unto His brethren, though He was without sin. How it would help this young evangelist, for example, when he was laughed at for his strictness, or when he was blamed for his inexorable adherence to the truth of Christ, to remember that even He who was the Eternal Son of God endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and that without a moment's hesitation He witnessed a good confession, though He knew the price of it would be agony, shame, and death! There was a difference, however, between the Lord's confession and Timothy's, or ours. This is denoted by a change of verb made by Paul, which is not noticed at all in our Authorised Version; and in the Revised Version the distinction is hardly marked, because the two words

"confess" and "witness" employed by the Revisers are loosely used in English. Timothy "confessed" the good confession, Christ Jesus "witnessed" the good confession. Bengel, in clearer Latin, puts it thus: "*Testari confessionem erat Domini, confiteri confessionem Timothei*" —"To witness a confession is the Lord's, to confess it is Timothy's." Christ "witnessed" because He was identified with the truth He confessed, and was the source of every such confession after. Timothy "confessed," for his confession was responsive and secondary, and found its inspiration in that of his Lord.

2. *Christ's achieved victory* is another source of encouragement to His faithful followers. The Cross of Calvary was the immediate result of our Lord's good confession; but that was not its final result. Unseen as yet by mortal eye, His manifestation is coming ever nearer to the world; and meanwhile it is seen and rejoiced in by one after another of the saints who pass away into the world of spirits. God, who quickeneth all things, has raised Him from the dead, and amongst the glorified and redeemed He already appears as Prince and Saviour; and hereafter every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him. The victory of Christ is the encouragement and inspiration of all who are engaged in the conflicts of truth with error, of holiness with sin.

Notice how this description of the expected appearing of Christ leads to the noble doxology which celebrates—

II. The Greatness and Glory of God, "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the

light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." If He be for us, who can be against us? Whether or no this sublime doxology, couched as it is in lyrical form, was already in use in the psalmody of the Ephesian Church, as some suggest that it was, we cannot tell; but that it would fitly express the feelings of devout hearts then and now is unquestionable. Nor is it simply to be admired for its beauty. It had special force in the connection before us. Timothy is fittingly reminded that—

1. *God is eternal.* All time is at His disposal. The delay which seems long and weary to us is nothing to Him; nothing in comparison with the awful eternity which lies before Him. As Mrs. Browning sings—

> "Eternity stands always fronting God;
> A stern colossal image, with blind eyes,
> And grand dim lips, that murmur evermore,
> 'God—God—God!'"

"He only hath immortality," and all others have it as His gift. The gift of God to men is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. *God is the blessed and only Potentate.* If you substitute for "blessed" its synonym in modern English, you get the beautiful truth, that ours is a "happy" God, —full of joy in Himself, the source of joy to all His creatures. He is a Father who has a smile on His face, and a heart welling over with love and kindness; He is One to whom the youngest and the most feeble may come with certainty of welcome.

3. "*God quickeneth all things.*" He can so quicken us that out of sadness and difficulties and torpor He can raise us to newness of life. The other day, when making our way up a narrow stream, on both sides of which the banks were richly clothed with reeds and grasses, with willows and flowers, our attention was attracted by the most exquisite May-flies, dazzling with gold and blue, flitting hither and thither in the sunshine; and when we remembered what they had been—so trivial as to be unnoticed by mortal eye, so unsightly that, had they been unearthed, a broken twig would have been equally attractive—we had new thought of Him who "quickeneth all things;" who is "the happy, the only Potentate," who makes everything beautiful in its time; and who, through Jesus Christ, proffers to us the immortality which is His.

4. *God is incomprehensible*—as yet to us—in Himself and in His doings; "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto." It is a beautiful thought, that He is not hidden from us through absence of light, but through excess of light. We cannot bear to look with naked eye upon the sun, and if we tried to do so long we should be blinded. Much more are we incapable of perceiving the majesty and glory of the God we humbly adore; but we wait for the promised day when in His light we shall see light. Therefore, amid the gradual development of His purposes, we have only to witness a good confession, leaving all the results to Him. Maintain righteousness and truth; be loyal to conviction and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit; and then be content

that the issues depend on Him whose plans are wiser and more far-reaching than yours. For, finally—

5. *God is Almighty*, "the only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords," the King of those who reign, the Lord of those who rule. All authority is in His hands. The apostles recognised this even in regard to emperors, proconsuls, and procurators, though they were such as Pontius Pilate; and out of the evils done by these He brought forth good. It was so once, it is so still; and amidst the confusion and turmoil of changing governments the hearts of God's people may be at rest.

Let us not lose sight of Him to whom in this passage the great apostle ascribes honour and power everlasting. We too often regard ourselves as the rulers of the world, and forget our absolute dependence; but, in relation to the blessed and only Potentate, we are far more insignificant than insects are in relation to us. That common fly, which you could crush with your finger, and which feeds unnoticed on your crumbs, probably has no knowledge of you, no consciousness of your vast superiority; and unless you are enlightened by God's Spirit, you may live and die in equal ignorance of Him who is equally near, who quickeneth all things, "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." But to have no knowledge of God is to be without hope of heaven.

X.

THE PERILS AND POSSIBILITIES OF THE RICH.

(1 Tim. vi. 17–19.)

Once before in this chapter Paul had referred to the spiritual dangers which lurked in riches. In that previous exhortation, however, he was thinking of those who made wealth their idol, and were ready to sacrifice principle and character on its behalf. But here he is alluding to those who were in the Church, and who wished to use what they possessed for God's glory and man's welfare. This evidently implies that none were shut out from fellowship because they were wealthy; or only welcomed on condition that they were prepared to share and share alike with their brethren; as some have supposed was the case from the incident recorded in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There were Church members who were rich, or who were at all events rich relatively to their brethren; and they were faithfully warned against the sins to which they were most strongly tempted.

These earnest and frequent warnings in Scripture are the more necessary, because even Christian communities have too often been faithless in this matter.

The sins of the rich are sometimes glozed over with honeyed words, while the sins of the poor are condemned and punished severely enough. Indeed, so far is this true that even here, in England, where we fairly boast of the even-handed justice dealt out by our courts, a rich man will frequently get off with a fine and a reprimand, while for a similar offence a poor man is cast into prison. In all ages the tendency has been that way, and Shakespeare, as usual, spoke truly when he said—

> "Through tattered clothes small vices do appear:
> Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
> And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks:
> Arm it in rags, a pigmy straw doth pierce it."

Against this the Church is bound to utter her protest; and amongst her own members, and through her brave teachers, she must warn the rich as faithfully as the poor, for if Christ's words are true, their spiritual perils are greatest.

I. The Dangers of the Rich are manifold, but only two or three are suggested here.

1. *The danger of self-conceit* is hinted at in the words, "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded." The vulgar *boasting* of wealth, and the ostentatious display of it, are indications of this; but the sneers of society and the growth of better taste have diminished such habits somewhat, although, of course, these are not Christian motives, and have no moral value. To refrain from bragging about money because it is considered "bad form" to do so, savours more of the world than of Christ.

Again, the *self-sufficiency* that leads a successful man to attribute all his gains to his own shrewdness and diligence, and to speak contemptuously of those who never get on in the world, as if God had nothing to do with his physical energy and mental calibre, with the education and training of his youth, or with the unexpected opportunities of his manhood, is another sign of "high-mindedness." And the *pride* which refuses to associate with those whose income is smaller, and which will hold aloof from intelligent and religious men and women, in order to cultivate acquaintance with those whose minds are shallow, whose characters are doubtful, but whose establishments are costly, and whose influence in the money market is great,—this is contrary to all that we know of the life and will of Christ Jesus, and He cannot for a moment tolerate it in His professed followers. He made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant ;—though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor.

2. *Another danger threatening rich men is that of trusting to uncertain riches.* Many live for them, think of little else beyond making money, or spending it, or investing it; forgetting how often and how swiftly riches take to themselves wings and fly away. It is on this evanescence that Paul lays stress when he speaks of the folly of trusting to them.

He hints at the conquest of this by exercising confidence in the living God, who *giveth* us all things richly to enjoy. The remembrance of the fact that God gave you money

adds sacredness to it, a sense of responsibility in the use of it, and arouses the gratitude and praise which are His due.

II. The Opportunities of the Rich are as noteworthy as their dangers.

1. *They can "do good" to others*, and many a noble institution for the physical recreation of the poor, for the education of the ignorant, for the cure of the sick, for the salvation of the heathen, has its source in the generous and wise gifts of those whom God has prospered. But beside this—

2. *They can do noble things.* The words used by Paul, which are both rendered "good" (in the R. V. as well as in the A. V.), have not the same meaning in Greek. They would be better translated, "Charge them that they do good, and that they be rich in noble deeds." The latter word used by Paul signifies what is honourable and lovely in itself. It fell from the lips of our Lord when He described Mary's act of devotion in pouring the precious ointment on His head in spite of the disciples, who said, "To what purpose is this waste?" Rich men can afford to make wise and noble experiments in philanthropy and in Christian enterprise. Suppose, for example, that a wealthy Christian man is dissatisfied with the present mode of conducting foreign missions. He is of opinion that too much is wasted in management, that others besides preachers should be sent. Why should he not, for Christ's sake, himself undertake a great and costly experiment at his own charge, establishing on his own account a little community of Christian men and women

in some centre of heathenism, and doing this even at the risk of failure, in hope of opening out a new mode of evangelisation? Men give their tens of thousands for a park or for a library, for a home for the insane, or for a noble educational institution—and so far they do well; but we have seldom heard of such a great gift on behalf of direct Christian work. Yet we are to charge the wealthy that they are to be rich in such noble works, and that they do them with eagerness, being "*ready* to distribute," "*willing* to communicate."

III. The Recompense of the Rich who are thus faithful is not obscurely taught in the words which describe them as laying up in store for themselves "a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Of course, Paul does not mean that they gain eternal life by their good works. No one insists more strongly than he does on the fact that salvation is the gift of sovereign grace to the sinful and undeserving. But from its nature this grace becomes a talent, with which we are to do service for God. We must not let it escape from us like a balloon flying heavenward from the loose grip of the holder. And since the nature of the future recompense is found in the development of life, all that makes that life more full of possibility and of result lays up in store a good foundation against the time to come. The fact is, brethren, that the connection between this life and that is far closer than many imagine it to be. Not more intimate is the connection between harvest and seed-sowing than the connection between heaven and earth.

"He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

XI.

PERIL AND PRESERVATION.

(1 Tim. vi. 20, 21.)

Every Christian teacher has received, as Timothy did, a sacred trust, namely, the Truth of God as revealed in and through Jesus Christ. This we are bound to hand down unimpaired to the generation which follows us, guarding ourselves on the one side against stereotyping living truth in lifeless forms; and, on the other side, against making vague compromises with the Protean spirit of error. Paul was anxious about this. He thought of Christian truth as being a priceless treasure carried in the midst of Christ's army; and now that he was about to lay down his sword, leaving it to be wielded by younger hands, he cried, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust!" The enemies of the truth vary, and the weapons of defence vary too. Therefore we must be slow to condemn those who use different phraseology and different modes of teaching from those of their fathers. "Butler's Analogy," for example, was a noble argument in its day, and was a suitable defence against the sort of attack which was made on our faith over a century ago; but it is not adapted for defence

against modern scepticism. Indeed, a suit of armour from the Tower of London would be of equal value against modern arms of precision. The modes and weapons of defence may vary, but the essential truth is the same, and the old fidelity to it is as necessary now as ever.

I. The Peril against which the Apostle warns Timothy was the intellectual pride and subtle speculation which, afterwards, in the second and third centuries, became formulated into a sort of philosophical system. It was then known as Gnosticism, because it exalted "gnosis"—knowledge—above faith, and was of a decidedly presumptuous and pragmatical tendency. Already the semi-religious speculation was appearing in germ in the East, whence it spread disastrously through Greece and Egypt; and Paul was justified in speaking of it as consisting "in profane babblings," and in the opposition of a gnosis, or knowledge, which was falsely so called, because it invalidated the higher knowledge which comes to the Church through Christ and the Holy Spirit of God.

The effect of such knowledge has ever been to cause men to err concerning the faith; to lose simplicity and devoutness; to wander into the pleasant meadows of Doubting Castle, till they are seized and imprisoned by Giant Despair; and unless they there learn to pray, and bethink them of the key of promise, they are left at last to fumble and stumble among the tombs. "He who wandereth out of the way of understanding shall abide in the congregation of the dead."

II. Preservation from such peril is to be found in God's answer to the prayer which Paul breathed over

Timothy—"Grace be with thee." We cannot by searching find out God. Intellectual acuteness has never yet succeeded in discovering Him. But to all who are penitent and lowly, conscious of sin, and crying for light, perhaps having no language but a cry, He makes Himself known. In spiritual experience, as in nature, the Sun conquers the mists which the earth generates. Before we can serve the Master we must see Him; and to every one who longs to do so He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He does not say, "Before you receive my grace you must know many things;" but He says, "If you receive my grace you shall know what you know not now —God, and Truth, and Heaven!"

The frank and free forgiveness of sin must be the starting-point for holiness. Instead of saying, "Go and sin no more, and then I will not condemn thee," with Godlike magnanimity our Lord exclaims, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." The consciousness of pardoning love is our incentive to the holiness which nothing can mar, and to the fidelity which temptation and death shall never shake.

"His grace will to the end
Stronger and brighter shine;
Nor present things nor things to come
Shall quench the spark divine."

"Grace be with thee. Amen."

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON